







J. Almond

February. 24. 1898









HERMIT SAINTS



LIVES  
OF  
THE ENGLISH SAINTS.

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Hermit Saints.

ST. GUNDLEUS.	ST. EDELWALD.
ST. HELIER.	ST. BETTELIN.
ST. HERBERT.	ST. NEOT.

ST. BARTHOLOMEW.

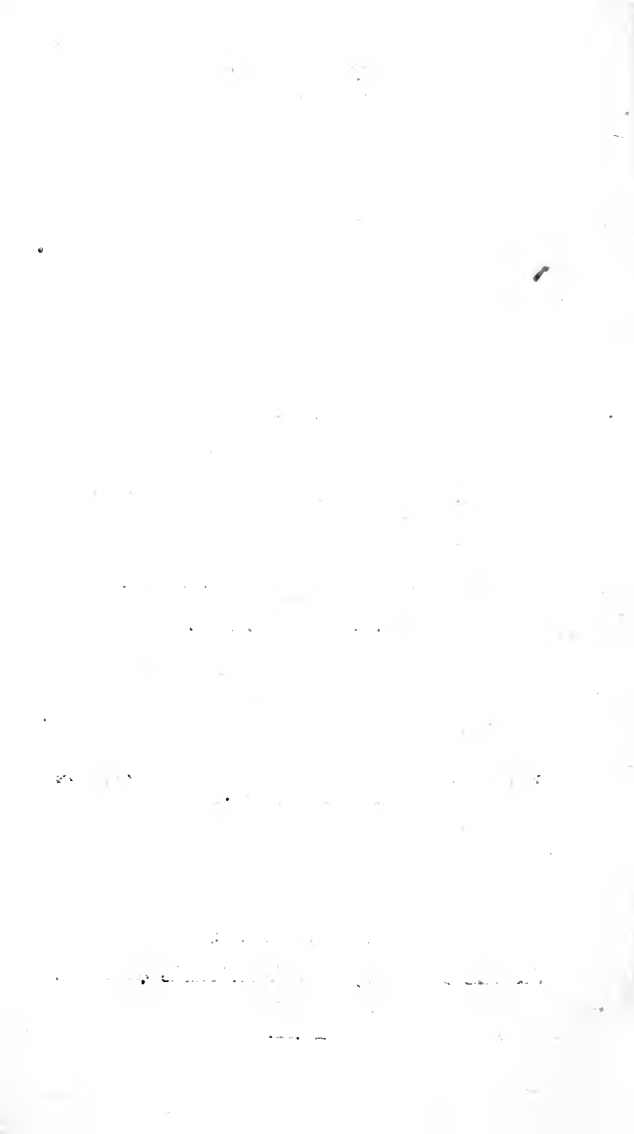
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MANSUETI HÆREDITABUNT TERRAM, ET DELECTABUNTUR IN  
MULTITUDINE PACIS.

LONDON:  
JAMES TOOVEY, 36, ST. JAMES'S STREET.

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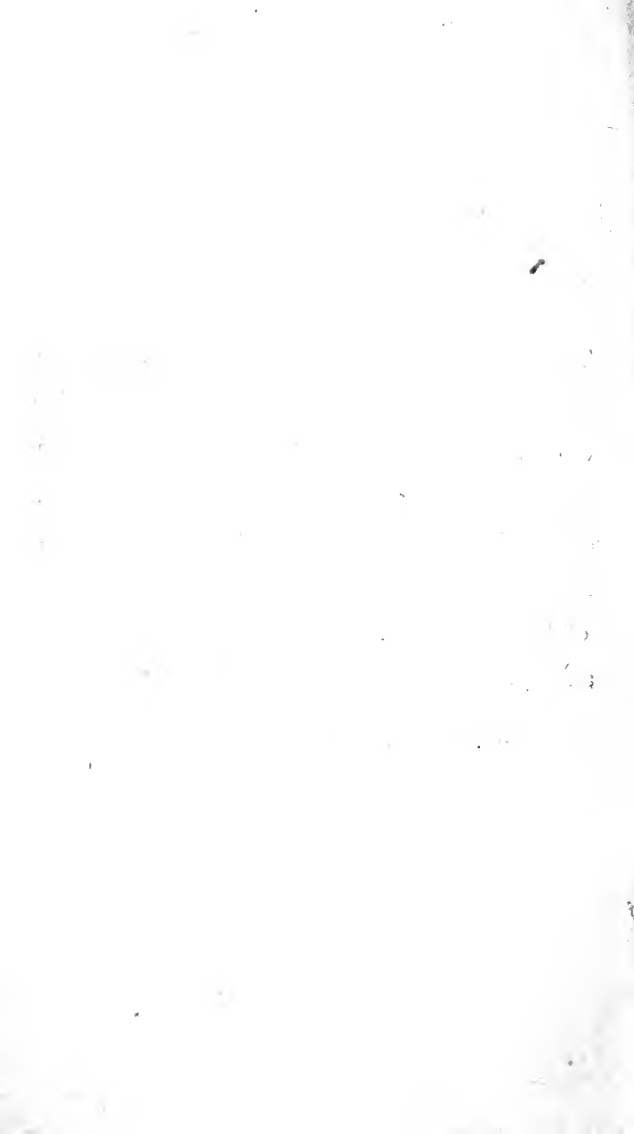
1844.



## ADVERTISEMENT.

The following Lives are the work of several persons, who have written independently of each other, though their views will be found to be coincident on some important and difficult points which are brought into discussion in the course of the narrative. The Legend of St. Bettelin belongs to more than one author.

Holy Thursday, 1844.





A LEGEND OF

St. Gundleus,

HERMIT IN WALES, ABOUT A.D. 500.

THE Christian lives in the past and in the future, and in the unseen ; in a word, he lives in no small measure in the unknown. And it is one of his duties, and a part of his work, to make the unknown known ; to create within him an image of what is absent, and to realize by faith what he does not see. For this purpose he is granted certain outlines and rudiments of the truth, and from thence he learns to draw it out into its full proportions and its substantial form,—to expand and complete it ; whether it be the absolute and perfect truth, or truth under a human dress, or truth in such a shape as is most profitable for him. And the process, by which the word which has been given him, “returns not void,” but brings forth and buds and is accomplished and prospers, is Meditation.

It is Meditation<sup>1</sup> which does for the Christian what Investigation does for the children of men. Investigation may not be in his power, but he may always

<sup>1</sup> Some excellent remarks on this subject will be found in the Introduction to a work which has appeared since these pages were sent to press, “Life of Christ, from the Latin of St. Bonaventura.”

meditate. For Investigation he may possess no materials or instruments; he needs but little aid or appliance from without for Meditation. The barley loaves and few small fishes are made to grow under his hand; the oil fills vessel after vessel till not an empty one remains; the water-pots become the wells of a costly liquor; and the very stones of the desert germinate and yield him bread. He trades with his Lord's money as a good steward; that in the end his Lord may receive His own with usury.

This is the way of the divinely illuminated mind, whether in matters of sacred doctrine or of sacred history. Here we are concerned with the latter. I say then, when a true and loyal lover of the brethren attempts to contemplate persons and events of time past, and to bring them before him as actually existing and occurring, it is plain, he is at loss about the details; he has no information about those innumerable accidental points, which might have been or have happened this way or that way, but in the very person and the very event did happen one way,—which were altogether uncertain beforehand, but which have been rigidly determined ever since. The scene, the parties, the speeches, the grouping, the succession of particulars, the beginning, the ending, matters such as these he is obliged to imagine in one way, if he is to imagine them at all. The case is the same in the art of painting; the artist gives stature, gesture, feature, expression, to his figures; what sort of an abstraction or a nonentity would he produce without this allowance? it would be like telling him to paint a dream, or relations and qualities, or panic terrors, or scents and sounds, if you confine him to truth in the mere letter; or he must evade the difficulty, with the village artist in the story, who

having to represent the overthrow of the Egyptians in the sea, on their pursuing the Israelites, daubed a board with red paint, with a *nota bene* that the Israelites had got safe to land, and the Egyptians were all drowned. Of necessity then does the painter allow his imagination to assist his facts ; of necessity and with full right ; and he will make use of this indulgence well or ill, according to his talents, his knowledge, his skill, his ethical peculiarities, his general cultivation of mind.

In like manner, if we would meditate on any passage of the gospel history, we must insert details indefinitely many, in order to meditate at all ; we must fancy motives, feelings, meanings, words, acts, as our connecting links between fact and fact as recorded. Hence holy men have before now put dialogues into the mouths of sacred persons, not wishing to intrude into things unknown, not thinking to deceive others into a belief of their own mental creations, but to impress upon themselves and upon their brethren, as by a seal or mark, the substantiveness and reality of what Scripture has adumbrated by one or two bold and severe lines. Ideas are one and simple ; but they gain an entrance into our minds, and live within us, by being broken into detail.

Hence it is, that so much has been said and believed of a number of Saints with so little historical foundation. It is not that we may lawfully despise or refuse a great gift and benefit, historical testimony, and the intellectual exercises which attend on it, study, research, and criticism ; for in the hands of serious and believing men they are of the highest value. We do not refuse them, but in the cases in question, we have them not. The bulk of Christians have them not ; the multitude has them not ; the multitude forms its

view of the past, not from antiquities, not critically, not in the letter ; but it developes its small portion of true knowledge into something which is like the very truth though it be not it, and which stands for the truth when it is but like it. Its evidence is a legend ; its facts are a symbol ; its history a representation ; its drift is a moral.

Thus then is it with the biographies and reminiscences of the Saints. "Some there are which have no memorial, and are as though they had never been ;" others are known to have lived and died, and are known in little else. They have left a name, but they have left nothing besides. Or the place of their birth, or of their abode, or of their death, or some one or other striking incident of their life, gives a character to their memory. Or they are known by martyrologies or services, or by the traditions of a neighbourhood, or by the title on the decorations of a Church. Or they are known by certain miraculous interpositions which are attributed to them. Or their deeds and sufferings belong to countries far away, and the report of them comes musical and low over the broad sea. Such are some of the small elements, which, when more is not known, faith is fain to receive, love dwells on, meditation unfolds, disposes, and forms ; till by the sympathy of many minds, and the concert of many voices, and the lapse of many years, a certain old figure is developed with words and actions, a history and a character,—which is indeed but the *portrait* of the original, yet is as much as a portrait, an imitation rather than a copy, a likeness on the whole, but in its particulars more or less the work of imagination. It is but collateral and parallel to the truth ; it is the truth under assumed conditions ; it brings out a true idea, yet by inaccurate or defec-

tive means of exhibition ; it savours of the age, yet it is the offspring from what is spiritual and everlasting. It is the picture of a saint, who did other miracles, if not these ; who went through sufferings, who wrought righteousness, who died in faith and peace, — of this we are sure ; we are not sure, should it so happen, of the when, the where, the how, the why, and the whence.

Who, for instance, can reasonably find fault with the Acts of St. Andrew, even though they be not authentic, for describing the Apostle as saying on sight of his cross, “Receive, O Cross, the disciple of Him who once hung on thee, my Master Christ?” For was not the Saint sure to make an exclamation at the sight, and must it not have been in substance such as this? And would much difference be found between his very words when translated, and these imagined words, if they be such, drawn from what is probable, and received upon rumours issuing from the time and place? And when St. Agnes was brought into that horrible house of devils, are we not quite sure that angels were with her, even though we do not know any one of the details? What is there wanton then or superstitious in singing the Antiphon, “Agnes entered the place of shame, and found the Lord’s angels waiting for her,” even though the fact come to us on no authority? And again, what matters it though the angel that accompanies us on our way be not called Raphael, if there be such a protecting spirit, who at God’s bidding does not despise the least of Christ’s flock in their journeyings? And what is it to me though heretics have mixed the true history of St. George with their own fables or impieties, if a Christian George, Saint and Martyr there was, as we believe?

And we in after time, who look back upon the legendary picture, cannot for very caution's sake and reverence, reject the whole, part of which, we know not how much, may be, or certainly is, true. Nor have we means to separate ascertained fact from fiction ; the one and the other are worked in together. We can do nothing else but accept what has come down to us as symbolical of the unknown, and use it in a religious way for religious uses. At the best it is the true record of a divine life ; but at the very worst it is not less than the pious thoughts of religious minds,—thoughts frequent, recurrent, habitual, of minds many in many generations.

The brief notice of St. Gundleus, which is now to follow, is an illustration of some of these remarks. It will be but legendary ; it would be better, were it not so ; but in fact, nothing remains on record except such tokens and symbols of the plain truth, in honour of one whose name has continued in the Church, and to the glory of Him who wrote it in her catalogue.

St. Gundleus was a king or chieftain, whose territory lay in Glamorganshire, and he lived about A.D. 500. He was the father of the great St. Cadoc, and his wife was Gladusa, the eldest of ten daughters of King Bran. Of these ladies one was St. Almehda ; another St. Keyna ; a third, little deserving any honourable memory herself, was the mother of St. David.

One night a supernatural voice broke in upon the slumbers of St. Gundleus and Gladusa. "The King of heaven, the Ruler of earth, hath sent me hither : " thus it spoke ; "that ye may turn to His ministry with your whole heart. You He calls and invites, as He hath chosen and redeemed you, when He mounted on

the Cross. I will show you the straight path, which ye must keep, unto the inheritance of God: lift up your minds, and for what is perishable, slight not your souls. On the river's bank there is a rising ground; and where a white steed is standing, there is the place of thy habitation."

The king arose in the morning; he gave up his sovereignty to his son Cadoc; he left his home, he proceeded to the hill, and found the animal described. There he built a Church, and there he began an abstinent and saintly life: his dress a haircloth; his drink water; his bread of barley mixed with wood ashes. He rose at midnight and plunged into cold water; and by day he laboured for his livelihood. Holy Cadoc his son, who at length became Abbot of Carvan, a neighbouring monastery, often came to him, and made him of good heart, reminding him that the crown is the reward, not of beginners, but of those who persevere in good things.

The hill wanted water; St. Gundleus offered up his prayers to God, and touched the dry soil with his staff; a spring issued from it clear and unfailing.

When his end was approaching, he sent to St. Dubricius, Bishop of Llandaff, and to St. Cadoc his own son. From the hands of the latter he received his last communion, and he passed to the Lord on the 29th of March. An angelic host was seen about his tomb, and sick people, on invoking his intercession, were healed.

His Church, which became his shrine, was near the sea and exposed to plunderers. Once when pirates from the Orkneys had broken into it, and carried off its contents, a storm overtook them on their return, and, dashing their vessels against each other, sunk all but two. At another time a robber, who had made off

with a sacred chalice and vestments, was confronted by the sea apparently mounting up against him and overwhelming him. He was forced back into the Church, where he remained till morning, when he was arrested, and, but for the Bishop of Llandaff, would have undergone capital punishment.

Whether St. Gundleus led this very life, and wrought these very miracles, I do not know; but I do know that they are Saints whom the Church so accounts, and I believe that, though this account of him cannot be proved, it is a symbol of what he did and what he was, a picture of his saintliness, and a specimen of his power.



A.

## Legend of St. Helier,

HERMIT IN JERSEY.

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### INTRODUCTION.

THE following pages are principally derived from the Acts of St. Helier, published by the Bollandists among the Lives of Saints honoured on the 16th of July. The story is here called a legend, because from the mistakes made by the author of the Acts, and from the distance of time at which he lived from the age of the Saint, many things which he advances rest on little authority. From the occurrence of the word Normannia, the Bollandists argue that he lived after the ninth century, at least three hundred years after St. Helier. He also mistakes Childebert the first for Childebert the second, and places the events which he relates after Brunehault, the famous queen of Austrasia. Again the vague words *Australis climatis fortissimus*, applied to Sigebert, looks very like a perversion of Austrasia, the ancient name for the eastern part of France. On the other hand, it is not by any means meant to assert that the whole of the narrative is fiction. The author of the Acts, from several notices which will appear in the course of the legend, was acquainted with Jersey; he

therefore represents the traditions of his time current in the island with respect to St. Helier. Traces of that tradition remain to this day in the islands, and what is now called St. Helier's hermitage agrees completely with the description of the place given in the Acts printed by the Bollandists. Again the journey from Terouenne (a town near Boulogne, destroyed by the Emperor Charles V.) along the coast to Normandy, is described with accuracy, and traces of the honour formerly paid to the Saint in the diocese of Boulogne are recorded in the commentary of the Bollandists prefixed to the Acts. What is perhaps most important of all, these Acts are corroborated by the early Acts of St. Marculfus in many points, as for instance in the story of the repulsion of the Saxon fleet, and in the number of the inhabitants said to be in the islands. The Bollandists in the first volume of May assign the life of St. Marculfus to a period not later than the year 640, within the first century after St. Helier flourished. From all this, it appears probable that the leading facts of the story are true. We may even be warranted in supposing that God was pleased, for the conversion of the wild population of these islands, to work miracles by the hand of his servant. It is however still an open question, whether the particular miracles here recorded were those worked by St. Helier; and it may here be observed that the miracles said to have occurred before his baptism have less evidence than any of the others, because the scene to which they are referred lies at a distance from the island, in which it appears that the author of the Acts wrote his account; they have not therefore the insular tradition in their favour. In order to account for their appearance in the Acts of the Saint, it is not necessary to accuse the

author of dishonesty. In an age of faith, when miracles were not considered as proofs of a system which required no proof, but simply as instances of God's power working through His Saints, men were not critical about believing a little more or a little less. Again, there is no proof that the writers intended these stories to be believed at all. Many of them may have been merely *legends*, things worthy of being "read for example of life and instruction of manners."<sup>1</sup> Many a wild and grotesque tale about the triumphs of Saints and Angels over the powers of evil may have been told to the novices by an aged monk at recreation-time without being considered as an article of faith. Such stories were only meant to be symbols of the invisible, like the strange forms of devils which were sculptured about the Church. As for St. Helier's carrying his head in his hands, it may be observed that the writer only represents the story as a conjecture of the priest who attended on the Saint. And it may here be mentioned, that besides this of St. Helier, only three other instances have been found by us of similar legends, the well known story of St. Denys, that of St. Winifred, and that of St. Liverius, martyred by the Huns at Metz, A.D. 450, and mentioned in one Martyrology,<sup>2</sup> on the 25th of November. Of these four instances, that which is the best known, seems, though occurring in the Roman Breviary, to be tacitly or avowedly given up by most writers on the subject; and all, except the instance of St. Winifred, which may perhaps be considered in another place, are introduced to account for the removal of the body of a Saint from the place of his martyrdom. If there were not also a want of evi-

<sup>1</sup> Sixth Article.

<sup>2</sup> V. Usuard. ed. Soller, p. 700.

dence for these stories, this alone would not of course authorize us to mistrust them, for none would presume to limit the power of Almighty God or His favours to His Saints. As however they are related by writers far distant from the time when the events are said to have occurred, it may be allowed to class them among mythic legends. Into this form threw itself the strong belief of those faithful ages in the Christian truth that the bodies of Saints, the temples of the Holy Ghost, are under the special keeping of God, and that these precious vessels are one day to be again alive, and to be glorified for ever with the saintly souls, which without them are not perfect. The bodies of Saints have without doubt been kept incorrupt, as though life was still in them, and the belief that they had sometimes by God's power moved as though they were alive, was only a step beyond that fact. Finally, it may be well to mention, that as late as the year 1460, Henry VI. granted a favour to the Prior of the Canons of St. Helier, on account of the miracles still wrought by his intercession on the rocky islet where he died.

## A LEGEND OF ST. HELIER.

A great many hundred years ago, when Childebert was king of the Franks, there lived in the ancient town of Tongres, a nobleman named Sigebert. He was one of that race of blue-eyed and long-haired warriors, who had left their own cold forests in the north of Germany, to settle down in the rich plains which border on the Rhine. Though he was a nobleman, he was not created by letters patent like our dukes and earls, but he was the chief of one of the many tribes of his nation; his pedigree, though it was not enrolled in a herald's office, went as far back as Odin, the northern hero. His lands were all won by his good sword, and by the devotion of his followers, who loved him well, for he was kind and gentle to them, though rough to his enemies. His wife was a noble lady of Bavarian race, called Leufgard, and very happy they were together, for she was a beautiful and loving woman, and ever submissive to her lord's will. One thing however was wanting to them: they had no child, and they at length despaired of ever having any. As a last resource, they applied to a holy man, who lived near them, called Cunibert. Now you must know that at that time the Franks were a half heathen, half Christian people. Clovis, their most powerful chieftain, had become a Christian, and having been crowned and anointed king, had established something like an organized kingdom, principally by the aid of the Church. Great numbers of his followers had become Christian; but in this wholesale conversion, the fierce northern warriors still remained half pagan, and some of them

were not yet Christian even in name. Among these unhappily were Sigebert and his wife ; they applied to Cunibert rather as to a man who had power with God, than because they believed in our holy faith. Cunibert, who had long wished to convert the noble Germans, and had mourned over their perverseness, promised to pray for them, if they in return agreed to give him the child who should be born, that he might offer him up to God. They agreed to these terms, and in due time the prayers of the holy man were heard, and the lady bore a beautiful child. Before he was born, however, Cunibert had gone to the Holy Land to visit the tomb of our Lord, and he remained in the East for three years. On his return, he claimed the fulfilment of their engagement ; but the lady looked into the laughing eyes of her fair child, and could not find it in her heart to part with him. And Sigebert laughed aloud, and said that his son should be a warrior, and wield a sword and spear, and ride on horseback, not sing psalms and swing censers ; he should be brought up in a palace, and wear golden bracelets, and long flowing hair upon his head, as did his forefathers, not go about with a shaven crown and be a poor man like Cunibert. Thus did they stumble at the offence of the cross, as the world has done from the first. Holy Mary went on her way to Bethlehem poorly clad ; she had on a peasant's garment, and the world swept by and did not know that she was the rich casket which contained the pearl of great price, which whosoever findeth will sell all that he hath to buy.

Cunibert went away in sorrow, and probably gave up all thoughts of ever winning that beautiful child to Christ. But our blessed Lord, who was once himself a little child, had not forgotten him. For seven years

of his life he continued the same Frankish boy ; his limbs were strong and active, and every body loved him when they saw him playing about on the green sward. But all on a sudden, and without any apparent cause, he seemed to wither away ; his strength forsook him, and he became pale and weak. One day as he was lying in pain on his mother's lap, he said, " O, give me back to that holy man, by whose prayers I was born, and to whom you promised me." His parents saw that they could not struggle with the will of God, and sent their son, lying on a litter, to Cunibert. When the little boy saw Christ's servant, he said, " O, holy man, by whose prayers I was born, have pity upon me, and pray to your God to heal me." Then Cunibert knelt down beside the child's bed, and God heard his prayers, and the racking pains left him and he became as well as ever. Then the holy man took him to live with him, and gave him the name of Helier, making him a catechumen or candidate for Christian baptism. Then the boy was happy, for Cunibert taught him his letters, and he was soon able to read the Psalter, and to accompany his master when he sang the hours in Church. Cunibert had nothing but his own barley bread to give him, and except on feast-days he ate but one meal a day ; but he liked this better than the good cheer to which he had been accustomed at the joyous warrior's banquet in his father's hall.

All this while Helier was unbaptized ; his spiritual guide said nothing to him about it, and Helier wondered. He however remained in quiet patience, trusting that God would bring him to the laver of regeneration in His own good time. What was Cunibert's reason we cannot tell : perhaps he wished further

to subdue the impatience of the Frankish blood which ran in the boy's veins, or, as may by and bye appear more likely, God had revealed to him what was His gracious will with respect to that child. What were the mysterious movements of God's grace on the soul of Helier, we who have enjoyed the inestimable privilege of having from the first been taken up into the kingdom of heaven, cannot of course understand. We can only see the outward life of his soul and look on in wonder ; for now that Holy Ghost, who of old moulded the spirits of the prophets, and made St. John the Baptist to be a dweller in the wilderness and a holy eremite, dealt graciously with this child of pagan parents and made him give up the world to live a hard and lonely life. He gave him favour with the poor of the earth, among whom he had taken his place. The wild German who was in process of settling down from the savage forayer into the boor who tilled the ground, the half-Christianized giant of the northern forest, was attracted by the sanctity of this holy child, who lived day and night in the courts of the Lord's house. They brought him their sick and their blind, and thought that there was virtue in the touch of his little hand, and by the grace of God he healed them. It might have been thought that the wonders thus wrought by the hand of his child would have melted Sigebert's heart ; but instead of seeing in all this the power of the cross, he thought upon the charms and mysterious rites of his northern forests, and his heart was hardened. Then his clansmen came to him and said, " Let us kill this wizard Cunibert, and get thee back thy child ;" and he yielded to them and bade them slay the holy man.

Now God was pleased to reveal to Cunibert what



was coming upon him, and in the morning after they had sung matins together, he told the boy that his death was at hand, and bade him fly away. The child wept and said, "And will you not baptize me, O my father?" Cunibert replied, "God wills that another hand should do that, O my son." And the boy was very sorry and sore loath to part from his spiritual guide, but too obedient to gainsay him. They remained together all day in the Church, and only parted when evening fell, and then each retired to his cell. Cunibert, when he was alone, began as usual in quietness and peace to sing psalms, and as he was singing the hundred and first psalm, the wicked men entered. They rushed fiercely up to him, and just as he had come to the words "Quando venies ad me Domine," he bowed his head and they smote him down, and immediately went away. Helier, hearing a noise, came out of his little cell and went to his master's chamber. He found him lying dead, bathed in blood, but his countenance was placid, and his finger was still upon the book, pointing to the blessed words which were upon his lips when his spirit passed away. Helier wept sore at the sight, and cried aloud, "Wonderful is God in His Saints ; He will give strength and power unto His people : blessed be God." But he had no time to lose, for he knew that his kinsmen would not be long in coming to look for him : so he covered the body of his dear master, as well as he could with earth, and then with a sad heart he rushed away.

It was the dead of night when he left the Church, and he knew not where to go, but he went trusting in God's guidance. He might have returned to his mother's arms, but he preferred the dreary wild which he was treading to the dangers of his father's palace.

For six days he wandered on and on through the depths of pathless forests, dreading all the while to hear his father's horsemen pursuing him. At length he saw a distant town lying before him, and he lifted up his hands up to God and said, "Lead me in Thy way, and I will walk in Thy truth. Let my heart rejoice that it may fear Thy name. My God, save me from the hand of the sinner, and from the hand of mine evil father, who worketh against Thy law, for Thou art He on whom I wait." Having said this, he walked on, and found himself in the town of Terouenne. He was now almost spent with fatigue, and meeting a poor widow, he applied to her for help. She took him into her house and took care of him for two weeks. After this, he asked her to show him some lonely place, where he could serve God in quiet. She led him a little way out of the town, to St. Mary's Church. The house of God was the place to which he naturally turned. His dwelling was in the porch of the Church, and here he remained for five years, living as he had done with Cunibert. The rain and the wet formed deep pools about him, and his shoes were worn out, so that the sharp pebbles were often stained with his blood. But notwithstanding all these hardships, it never struck him that he could go elsewhere, for the only home that he had ever known was the Church, except indeed his father's palace, and that of course was out of the question. And the only guide whom he had known was Cunibert, and now that he was gone, he was ignorant where to look for another upon earth. So during these five long years, he waited patiently, trusting in God. When he wanted food he went to the widow's house, and there too he had a wooden pallet on which he stretched himself whenever he chose.

This way of life attracted the people of the place ; they saw in the youth one whom Christ had marked for His own by suffering, and who crucified his body for the Lord's sake. The sick and infirm learned to put faith in his prayers, and God was pleased to hear them, as He had done at Tongres, and healed them. At length, at the end of five years, an incident happened which more than ever raised his fame. The wife of a nobleman in the town of Terouenne, named Rotaldus, was by a dreadful accident the means of the death of her own child. The first impulse of the poor father was to rush to the Bishop of the place, and to implore him to go to Helier, and to command him to pray that the babe might return to life. Helier was filled with wonder when he saw the Bishop approach him, and still more when he heard his command ; but obedience was natural to him, and he followed in silence to the Church where the corpse of the little child lay stretched upon a bier. Then Helier bethought himself that this would be a sign whether the time was at hand when Christ would regenerate his soul in the holy waters of baptism. So he knelt down and lifted up his hands to heaven and said, " O God, in whose hand is all power, who didst raise the child on whom the door was closed and the son of the widow of Nain when borne on the bier, I pray thee, that if it is Thy will that I be made a Christian, may it be Thy will also of Thy great goodness that this child be raised to life." And when he had done praying, the child began to move and to cry for his mother.

The night after this miracle, Christ appeared in a vision to Helier, and bade him go to Nanteuil, where a man named Marculfus would baptize him, and teach him what was to be his way of life. As soon as he arose in

the morning, Helier set about obeying this command. It was not without tears that he took leave of the good woman who had been as a mother to him for so long ; but as soon as this parting was over, his heart was glad, for he was on his way to be made a Christian. The devil, however, who is ever roaming through the world, seeking whom he may devour, made one last effort to tempt him as he had tempted our blessed Lord. At the end of a day's journey, when Helier found himself near the little river Canche, the devil met him in a bodily shape, and said to him, " Dear youth, when thou mightest be rolling in all manner of worldly wealth, why wilt thou roam about alone, rushing after a visionary poverty ?" But Helier knew the tempter by his advice ; though he stood alone on the banks of the solitary stream, he did not fear him, and he pressed boldly on, saying, " Away with thee to that toil which was laid upon thee from the time that thou didst fall from heaven and lose the name of Lucifer." Then the devil vanished away, and Helier pursued his journey. He went on through the district of Ponthieu into Normandy, and found St. Marculfus at the Vaulxdunes, a range of low sandy hills along the sea-shore.<sup>3</sup>

The holy man whom God assigned to Helier in place of Cunibert, was one who was well able to enter into the simplicity and fervour of the youth. He was fighting

<sup>3</sup> This place, Vallesdunæ, is thus described by Cænalis, de Re Gallica, 2. p. 4. *Ora illa maritima quam appellant Vallesdunæ in Oximensi agro Gulielmi nothi victoria adversus Widonem Burgundionum comites filium memorabilis.* In the Chronicle of Normandy it is said to be three leagues from Caen, v. Receuil des Hist. Tom. 11. p. 333, where also see a curious description of the place from the Roman du Rom.

hard to root up the paganism which still lingered about the diocese of Coutances. Having received a command from God to build a monastery, he one morning mounted his ass and journeyed up to Paris, where his sanctity awed the mind of the savage Frankish king Childebert, so that he came back to Coutances with a grant of land at Nanteuil. Here on the borders of that stormy sea, which was not so wild as the men whom he had to rule, he built his Abbey. He would sometimes retire into a lonely island off the coast, which still bears his name, to serve God in solitude ; still, however, he was always to be found on the mainland whenever the service of God called him thither. To him then Helier repaired, and on the day of our Lord's nativity, in the Church of St. Mary, his soul was washed in the healing waters of baptism. For this Helier had longed with a patient longing, day and night, and now that he was born anew to Christ, he rejoiced with an unfeigned joy. He knew that God could overstep the bounds which He has set to Himself, and by a special grace keep from sin the soul of the unbaptized, if he has the desire of baptism ; but he also knew that regeneration, the proper gift of the gospel, was only given through the channel of baptism. Nay, though his body had been endued with virtue so as to heal the sick, yet this was nothing to him, as long as his soul lacked that illumination which is given by water and the Spirit. As then Cornelius, though the external gifts of the Holy Ghost had fallen upon him, was baptized, so was Helier brought to the holy font after so many years of waiting.

For three months he remained with Marculfus, but he longed to be at work and to carry out the crucifixion by which he had been crucified with Christ. He

begged of his new spiritual guide to point him out some lonely spot, where he could remain serving Christ with prayers and spiritual songs day and night. Woods and caves there were in plenty, where he might take up his abode; there was the old forest of Scissay, in the heart of which was still a pagan temple, where the savage people worshipped. But Marculfus sent him to live in a wilder spot than this. The Abbot of Nanteuil had so much to do on the mainland of the Cotentin, that he could not as yet take into the range of his labours the many islets which lie on that wild coast. The cluster now called the Channel Islands, was then a sort of legendary ground, a vague and shifting spot, on the verge of Christendom, and as yet untouched by the faith of Christ. Thither he sent Helier, and with him a priest named Romardus, to show the people of the islands what Christians were. They had not very far to sail from France to Jersey, for the islands were probably nearer to the mainland than they are now, such changes have the waves caused on the Norman coast. What is now St. Michael's bay, was then a large forest, and the people of Guernsey still have stories to tell about the time when their island and the little isle of Herm were one. The place to which they first came was Augia,<sup>4</sup> for that is the

<sup>4</sup> The author of the Acts of Helier calls the island Agna, which is an evident mistake for Augia, a word derived from the German *awe*, a meadow. There is another isle of Augia, in the lake of Constance, and the word forms part of the name of no less than eight monasteries in the diocese of Constance. The German names of these places are all compounds of *aw*, or *auc*, which is a proof of the etymology assigned to this name for Jersey. There are places in Normandy with nearly or entirely the same name, as Augia, le pays d'Auge, and the monastery of Augum or Eu, called also B. Maria Augensis.

name which the Franks gave to Jersey on account of its green meadows and well-watered valleys. Theirs was in all likelihood the first Christian foot which touched the ground of the island. It was the last stronghold of the Celts, where dwelt a thin remnant of the old race which the Franks had conquered. Here then in the old haunt of Druid rites, did Helier find himself, with the stone circles and the huge granite altars of a worn-out faith all around him.

And now how was he to set up the cross over these rude relics of an ancient world? He began by bearing it in his own flesh; he fasted and wept all day, and he sung psalms and kept his thoughts ever fixed on God and on all the wonders which Christ has wrought. No one who dwelt in king's houses, clad in soft raiment, could have hoped to win the hearts of the rough and simple feeders of cattle who dwelt on the island. It was the rude giant Christopher, says the legend, who bore the infant Jesus, with the globe and cross in his hand, across the swollen stream, and so by rough arts did Helier bring Christ over the fretful waves to these poor islanders. A common missionary might have preached to them for many a year in vain, but Helier certainly took no common way of teaching. He was to be the forerunner of the faith of Christ, and so, like John the Baptist, he lived a supernatural life. The place of his abode was as dreary as the wilderness on the banks of the Jordan. About the middle of what is now St. Aubin's bay, two huge rocks jut into the sea, divided from each other by a dark chasm, and from the island by a sort of causeway. At high tide, however, the water rushes through this chasm, and completely surrounds the rocks which are thus at certain times wholly cut off from the shore and from each other. On the

larger of these huge crags, may still be seen Helier's hermitage.<sup>5</sup> It is a rough pile of stones, built on a ledge of the shelving rock, which itself forms one side and the floor of the building. On the side nearest the sea, the thick wall is pierced by an opening about as large as the narrow loophole of one of the many watch towers built on the headlands of the coast; and through this, every wind that sweeps across the sea might whistle at will. In a corner of this dreary abode, there is a hole in the rock, now worn smooth, probably by the monks and pilgrims of after times, and here, as tradition says, did Helier stretch his limbs during the few hours which he gave to sleep. For this dreary place he gave up his father's palace; and if any one is tempted to ask why he took all this trouble, I would bid him wait till the end of my story, and he will know.

The people of the island soon found out Helier; it did not require a long train of thought to make out that he was a man of God; and two cripples, one a paralytic, and the other a lame man, came to him, and by the help of our blessed Lord he healed them. The simple chronicler who has written the acts of our Saint, has by chance here put in a few words which mark the spot of the miracle. He says that those people healed by Helier left the mark of their footsteps on the rock; now it happens that till a few years ago,

<sup>5</sup> It is possible that the building which is now on the spot where Helier lived, was afterwards built by the monks, and this must be decided by a person learned in architecture. To a common observer it bears the marks of the highest antiquity, and is not at all unlike the very ancient chapel called the Pauline, in the island of Guernsey. At all events it would only make St. Helier's hermitage indefinitely more austere if even this rude building was wanting.



there were in a part of the island not far from his cell, some strange marks, like the print of feet upon a hard rock on the sea-shore. No one could tell whether they were cut out by the hand of man, or were rude basins worked out by the sea in a fantastic form. The poor people of the island in after times told another tale about these footsteps. They said that the blessed Virgin had once appeared there, and had left the mark of her feet upon the rock, and a small chapel was built upon the spot.<sup>6</sup> Now it may be that these mysterious marks were neither left by the poor men whom Helier healed, nor yet by that holy Virgin; but still let us not despise the simple tales of the peasantry; there is very often some truth hidden beneath them. Thus in this case, we know that a long time after Helier's death, the people of the island still had stories to tell about his miracles, and loved to connect with him whatever appeared mysterious in their wild coast. Again the rough Celtic name<sup>7</sup> of the man whom Helier healed, grating unmusically in the midst of a Norman legend, shews that the tale belonged to an earlier age; so that it is very likely that this story contains traces of a real miracle done by God through Helier's hand. No one need pity the poor peasants for their faith. He alone is to be pitied who thinks all truth fable and all fable truth, and thus mistakes the fantastic freaks of the tide of man's opinion for the truth itself, which is founded on that rock which bears the print of our Lord's ever-blessed footsteps.

<sup>6</sup> The spot here meant is still called *Le Havre des Pas*. The rock and the ruins of the chapel have been lately blown up, to procure stone for the building of a fort.

<sup>7</sup> *Ascretillus*.

Helier had lived three years on his barren rock, when at length Marculfus found time to come and visit Jersey. The object of Marculfus in coming to the island was most likely to build a monastery there; for that had been found to be the only way of spreading light among the benighted people. Many an idol had still to be cut down by the zealous hand of a Saint; Brittany and the islands on its coast were especially a debatable ground between Christianity and heathenism. The lives of the Saints of the period are full of stories which shew the belief that evil beings still dwelt in the wild caves and forests of the country. Strange tales of wonderful voyages and of dragons destroyed by holy men are mingled with the Acts of the Saints.<sup>8</sup> And indeed we cannot tell how great may have been the power of the Evil one on his own ground in a heathen country, where he and his angels were worshipped, nor how much strength the Saints put forth to drive him out. At all events, it was found that the only way to root idolatry out of the hearts of the people, was to advance into the devil's ground and to plant an abbey in that forest where was an idol's temple. Many a monastery has become the head quarters of religion in the spot which was the seat of Druids; and many a hermit has won the veneration of the people by dwelling alone in some place which the fisherman and the peasant scarce durst approach, because it was be-

<sup>8</sup> V. Acts of S. S. Sampson and Maclovius. In the former of these traces are found of something very like second sight, and of an antagonist power granted to a Christian Abbot, v. p. 166 and 177. Acta S. S. Ben. vol. 1. Stories seem to have connected St. Maclovius with Brendan's famous voyage; but little credit however is given to them by the author of the Acts. Ibid, p. 218.

lieved to be haunted. This was visibly setting up the cross of Christ in triumph above the powers of wickedness. Often again the monastery arose around the hut of the hermit, whose holiness had drawn disciples around him. Again about this time St. Maur and his Benedictines arrived in France,<sup>9</sup> and were favoured by Childebert, the same king who had granted Nanteuil to St. Marculfus. All this had raised high the monastic order in France, and makes it the more likely that St. Marculfus meant Helier to be the Abbot of a monastery which was to be the centre of religion in the Channel Islands. He looked upon himself as a missionary going to evangelize men of Celtic race; when he took leave of his weeping brethren at Nanteuil, he said, "Brethren, mourn not for me, I pray you, for if I live I will not delay to return to you; but I must preach the word of God in other places, for therefore am I sent." Accompanied then by one of his priests, he went, say his Acts, "into the region of the Britons." Helier received him with joy. St. Marculfus, however, hardly knew his young disciple, so much was his countenance changed by his devotional exercises and his hard life. The cold west wind blows all across the Atlantic, often in boisterous weather forcing the waves with a peculiar hollow sound upon the rocky headlands, and through the narrow entrances of the many bays around the island; and it had done sad havoc with Helier's slender form and weather-beaten face. Long did they speak together in the little hermitage on the rock. The same old chronicler has told us what they spoke about; they related what God's grace had done for them, and how He had given them power to foil the devil, who had

<sup>9</sup> St. Maur came into France about 543.

tried to hurt their souls in this lonely place. All their joy was in the triumph of the cross and in the advance of Christ's kingdom.

St. Marculfus however could not remain long with him; very little is known about his labours in the island and how far he succeeded in converting them. He however probably did not do much, for some cause which is not on record soon took him back to the mainland. A few days however before he went, God enabled him by his prayers to do a signal service to the poor islanders. Romardus was one day looking forth on the wide waste of waters which surround the island, and I dare say his eyes often turned to the mainland of France, where the diocese of Coutances lay in the distance, and where now a sharp eye may faintly trace the outline of the western towers of its cathedral. He suddenly saw a vessel veering round one of the headlands which stretch into the sea, and soon after there appeared a whole fleet scudding before the wind and entering, their white sails filled with the breeze, into the broad bay of St. Aubin's. On a nearer approach he could see the fatal standard of the White Horse, which betokened a Saxon fleet. It was very likely a part of the band of adventurers which was at that time spreading havoc on the shore of England. Romardus was dreadfully alarmed at the sight; the poor people of the islands were far too few in number to resist this armed host. They were a peaceful race, engaged in feeding the cattle for which the verdant valleys of the island were famous, and utterly unable to fight these iron Saxons.<sup>1</sup> Romardus went to Helier's cell, and they both together went to Marculfus. He bade them

<sup>1</sup> *Divites pecoribus et aliis opibus.*

be of good cheer, and all three threw themselves upon their knees on the top of the bare crag, and prayed to God to turn away these blood-thirsty heathens from the islands which were ready to receive the cross. The prayer of a righteous man is very strong. Some of the Saxon keels had already touched the strand, when there gathered a black cloud in the heavens, and the sea began to boil up fearfully, as any one who has seen the white waves dashing on that coast can well believe. In a short time the wrath of God had scattered the heathen fleet; some of the vessels were dashed against each other; others were swallowed up by the waves, or broken in pieces against the many rocks which encircle that iron-bound coast. The men of the island had crowded up to St. Marculfus to beg of him to pray to his God for them; they were but thirty men in number,<sup>2</sup> but the Saint, pointing to the few Saxons who had landed, made the sign of the cross over these trembling islanders, and bade them be of good cheer, for God had given these savage plunderers into their hands. And so it fell out, for the Saxons, dismayed by the death or dispersion of their companions, and by the unexpected resistance, became an easy prey. Three days after this happened, Marculfus crossed over to France, taking Romardus with him, but still leaving one of his disciples in the island to be Helier's spiritual guide. He probably meant to return as soon as affairs on the continent would allow him. St. Marculfus how-

<sup>2</sup> The old Acts of St. Marculfus say : *fertur etiam-que a multis asseritur nonplus triginta incolarum temporibus illis in hac insula demorari.* As he is talking of the men capable of bearing arms, this would make about thirty families. The same number is repeated in the later Acts, and in St. Helier's Life, except that the latter says, *triginta promiscui sexus.*

ever never again saw Helier in the flesh, though they probably finished their earthly pilgrimage about the same time;<sup>3</sup> it was God's will that a man of another race should found the first monastery in the Channel Islands, and the Abbot of Nanteuil was never again able to visit Jersey.<sup>4</sup>

For twelve long years after his spiritual father had left him did Helier dwell on his barren rock. His scanty history does not tell us expressly what he did; nor whether he with his companion converted the islanders to the Christian faith. His life is hid with Christ in God. We are however told minutely how at last he fell asleep, after his short but toilsome life. One night when he was resting on his hard couch, our blessed Lord for whom he had given up all things, appeared to him in a vision, and smiling upon him, said, "Come to me, my beloved one; three days hence, thou shalt depart from this world with the adornment of thine own blood." In the morning his spiritual guide came to him, as he always did at the hour when the sea then,<sup>5</sup> as now, left bare the causeway between the land and the rock where he dwelt. Helier then related to him the vision which he had seen to his great grief, for he at once saw that the end of his young disciple was near. On the third

<sup>3</sup> St. Marculfus was ordained priest at thirty, and after this had time to found an abbey, and evangelize a district, before St. Helier knew him. Their acquaintance had lasted fifteen years when St. Helier died. Their deaths could not therefore have been much apart, and are generally placed about 558.

<sup>4</sup> The Acts of St. Marculfus mention that he converted many of the inhabitants of the island; as however he appears to have remained but a short time in the island, it seems likely that Helier and the person whom his Acts call his *pædagogus*, and who was probably a priest, really made these converts.

<sup>5</sup> Diluculo, recedente mari.

day Helier arose from his bed of rock, and looked out upon the sea. A strong south-west wind was blowing, and he saw that the sea was covered with ships running before the breeze into the bay of St. Aubin's. He knew that a fleet of Saxons was at hand, and his heart told him that this was the summons of his Lord, and that from these ruthless haters of Christianity he was to meet his death. He went back into his cell that he might die, as he had lived, in prayer. For some time his abode remained unknown, so like was it in colour to the grey cliff on which it was built. At last the cry or the flight of the sea-birds who shared the rock with Helier, called the attention of the pagans to the place, and they descried the cell perched on the edge and overhanging the tossing waves below. They were not long in climbing the cliff, and entering his rude abode. Neither silver nor gold was there to call forth their thirst for spoil, and they gazed for some time upon him, thinking him to be some poor madman. At length the truth probably flashed across the mind of one of these savages, that he was a Christian hermit, for he rushed up to him and cut off his head with his sword, and Helier immediately gave up his soul into the hands of his Lord, who had summoned him to appear before Him to receive the crown of martyrdom. Next morning his spiritual guide came down to the sea shore to cross over to the hermitage; when however he came down to the beach, he saw lying on the sand the body of his young disciple. He did not know how it came there; the tide might have floated it across the narrow channel between the hermitage rock and the mainland. But the head was resting so tranquilly on the breast between the two hands, and its features still smiling so sweetly, that he thought that God, to preserve the

body of the Saint from infidel hands, had endued the limbs with life to bear the head across to the shore. Bitterly did the master weep over the scholar; he called him aloud by the name of father, well knowing that he had gained more from Helier than Helier from him. He feared much that his precious body should after all become the prey of the barbarians, and he bore it in his arms into a little vessel which was lying near. He laid his beloved burden upon the deck, and sat down near it, watching it as a mother would do her child. At length, however, exhausted with grief and anxiety, he fell asleep. How long he slept he knew not; but when he awoke, he found himself on a coast which he had never seen. The vessel was swiftly gliding into a harbour, and men and women were standing on the shore, with their eyes fixed upon this strange sight, which they took for a phantom, a vessel driving on without sail or helmsman, its whole crew a sleeping man and a headless body. An invisible hand had unmoored the vessel, and angels had guided it through rapid current and past bristling rocks; and it swam on alone over the surface of the sea, till it came safely to the harbour where the Saint was to rest. And when the Bishop of the place heard the story, he came down to the shore in his pontifical garments, and with incense and chaunting they bore the body in procession to the Church.<sup>6</sup>

But however this be, let us adore the wonderful ways of Christ our God, who snatched this brand from the burning to which by the wickedness of his parents

<sup>6</sup> The Acts of St. Helier are so confused, that it is impossible to make out what is the place here meant. The abbey of Beaubee, in Normandy, possessed some of the relics of St. Helier.



he seemed to be born. He in His great goodness bade this beautiful flower spring from a rude stock, and spread the sweet odour of His name in these distant isles. He brought this son of a Frankish chieftain out of his father's palace all across France, to die at the hands of men of his race, in an attempt to teach His faith to the poor remnant of the Celtic race in this lonely island. Vague and dim is the Christianity of this cluster of isles in those early times, when it is uncertain whether they belonged to Dol or to Coutances.<sup>7</sup> But St. Helier is the first Christian on record

<sup>7</sup> It is certain that in Norman times they were in the see of Coutances, and this in itself makes it probable that they were always a part of that diocese, for political changes do not seem to have affected the state of dioceses marked out by the Church, except by the consent of the Church. For instance, the parishes of St. Sampson, of Rupes, and Palus Warnerii, were always peculiars of the Bishop of Dol, though situated in the diocese of Rouen, because they had once belonged to St. Sampson's Abbey of Pentale, and that, though the Abbey itself was destroyed by the Normans.—Gall. Christ. Tom. xi. 120. Again, the Channel Islands themselves were never regularly transferred to an English diocese, though the see of Coutances was lost to the Kings of England. A papal bull allowed ships to go freely to the islands in war time, apparently for the very purpose of allowing the Bishop of Coutances to cross over when he pleased. If then the islands had ever been in the diocese of Dol, it seems likely that they would never have been transferred. The only argument on the other side is, that Baldricus, Archbishop of Dol, asserts that these islands were given to St. Sampson, by king Childebert. I may, however, be asked, whether an Archbishop of Dol in the twelfth century is very good authority for an event of the sixth, especially, it may be added, at the height of the dispute between Dol and Tours. Perhaps the most likely account is, that in the stormy times of the Franks, the islands never strictly formed any part of the diocese; it is not on record that St. Sampson made a permanent establishment in

who strove to bend the stubbornness of the British race, and to turn them from the worship of the fountain and the rock to the faith of Christ. How many were converted by him we cannot tell, but at all events it was from him that they first gathered their ideas of the Christian faith. His fasts and his prayers and his innocent blood rose up before the Lord in behalf of all these islands. In after times, things were much changed in this little cluster of isles; they were no longer the same lonely spots as when Jersey had but thirty men who could bear arms, and Guernsey was a sacred island of Druids. In the many wars which the men of Brittany waged against each other or their neighbours, the isles were useful retreats for those of Celtic race. Dukes of Brittany, Frankish counts, and native lords appear amongst them; and a Neustrian Abbot<sup>8</sup> came thither as an envoy from Charlemagne. Rugged and stubborn was the Breton race, and loose was its allegiance to France, whether a long-haired Frank or a Carlovingian reigned at Paris. They could hardly bow before the awful majesty of Charlemagne, and the feeble princes of his race only calmed them by opposing them as a barrier to the Normans. In these stormy times of Brittany, the highlands were homes to their brethren on the continent, and Saints of different race from Helier came there, so that they seemed destined to be torn from Coutances, the see which had sent him forth. About the very time when St. Marculfus died, St. Sampson came to Jersey with his cousin

them, though he certainly preached as a missionary in at least one of them, apparently Alderney, and probably in more, v. Act. S. S. Ben. Tom. 1. p. 184; and St. Maglorius had resigned his bishoprick when he crossed over to Jersey.

<sup>8</sup> V. Neustria Pia. p. 155,

Judael, a prince of British blood. Shortly after came St. Maglorius, who healed the Frankish count Loyesco of his leprosy, and to him was given half the island, rich in woodlands and in fisheries. Here he built a fair Abbey, where dwelt sixty monks; in his day the faith of Christ sunk deep into the minds of the islanders, for the poor fishermen who in their frail barks had to wrestle with that stormy sea, loved him well, and willingly brought their fish to the Abbey, whose vassals they were. Long afterwards they told how St. Maglorius was kind to them, so that when one of them was drowned, the Saint wept sore, and vowed a vow never to eat fish again; and when evening came, he with all the monks went down to the shore chaunting litanies; then he threw himself upon the sandy beach, and God heard his prayer, and was pleased to restore the dead man to life. In Guernsey too,<sup>9</sup> the Saint healed the daughter of the native chieftain, and a field there, where once stood a chapel of which he was the patron, is still called after his name. All this seemed to shew that another race than that of Helier was to

<sup>9</sup> Bissargia insula eidem Sargiæ vicina, dives opum atque frugum, a quodam viro nobili, qui vocabatur Nivo, jure hæreditario tenebatur. Act. S. S. Ben. Sæc. 1. vita St. Maglorii 29. The author goes on to speak of the numerous ploughs and vessels of the island, which description agrees much better with Guernsey than with the far smaller island of Sark. A learned friend in the Channel Islands, to whom these pages are much indebted, has suggested that Bissargia or Ve-sargia, is a Celtic diminutive, implying a larger Sargia. That the Sargia of the Acts is Jersey, is proved from its being called Javarsiacum, v. Ann. Ben. ii. 655. Guernsey, as being the smaller island, might therefore be called Bissargia. It is, however, very probable that the names of these small islands may have been confounded in those early times.

possess the Channel Islands; many of the numberless clear fountains in the islands are still called after Breton Saints, and many of the little chapels which once studded the green valleys which run up and down through the whole country, were dedicated to those favourite patrons of the spot. The islands, with the entire Cotentin, were formally given up to Brittany when Charles the Bold gave to Salomon, a Celtic prince, the golden circlet of a king. But after being bandied about from Frank to Celt, the isles were finally gained by William, second duke of Normandy, whose long sword was used to settling accounts between Brittany and France. Then came the time when churches and chapels were dedicated in the names of St. Mary and St. George, instead of St. Sampson and St. Anne, the patron saints of Brittany. Then was Guernsey really the Holy Isle, when St. Michael's Abbey arose on the hillock where the huge granite altar of the Druids still remains to shew how the blessed Archangel has triumphed over Satan; and there also in times of Norman rule was built the nunnery of St. Mary of Lihou, in passing whose islet even now French vessels vail their topmast, though only the ruins exist. Then too it becomes clearer that through all these changes the name of St. Helier had not been forgotten. The Church of Coutances, which on the 16th of July celebrates the feast of the youthful martyr, was now without doubt the see to which the Channel Islands belonged. Even when the Celtic names lingered only in the lonely places of nature, and the Norman manors of St. Ouen, Anneville, and Saumarez, shewed that the soil was possessed by lords of a different race, still St. Helier was remembered. A monastery was founded afterwards by William Fitz-Hamon, a Norman nobleman,

on the fellow rock to that on which he lived, where Elizabeth castle now stands ; and the rude steps which lead to his hermitage are even now to be seen worn by the steps of pilgrims in former times. There now appear faint marks on the wall, as if the monks of St. Helier had done their best to adorn it with frescoes, and to turn it into a small chapel by raising an altar in it. Well might they be grateful to him, for he sanctified the island with his blood. Not only Jersey, but the whole of the little group of islands was benefited by him, for he first, as far as records tell us, crossed, in the character of a servant of Christ, the stormy sea which divides them from the mainland ; and the Abbot of St. Michael, when every third year he bore the Holy Sacrament, on Corpus-Christi day, through a great part of Guernsey, might bless the memory of Helier, whose blood had first made Christ known to these lonely islands. Even now many a peasant in the two largest islands of the Norman cluster, bears the name of the Saint, though he most probably has forgotten him to whom in great part he owes it that he is a Christian.

## HISTORY OF

# St. Herbert,

## HERMIT ON DERWENTWATER.

A.D. 687.

It is not to be expected that much information should remain to us respecting one whose aim when on earth had been to retire from the world and to be unknown. Such is the case of St. Herbert, a Priest and Confessor, who in the latter part of the seventh century led a solitary life on one of the islands of Derwentwater, which still bears his name.

He is known to us only through his connexion with St. Cuthbert, to whom he was long united by the ties of religious friendship; and all the records which remain of his life are contained in the Histories of that Saint. One, a life supposed to be written by a contemporary monk of Lindisfarne: the others, by the venerable Bede; first, a metrical history, principally of his miracles, in Latin hexameters, in which as we might expect, there is a poetical freedom in reporting the words of the Saints; a later and more full and exact life, from which the narrative we are interested in, is repeated almost in the same words, in the account of St. Cuthbert, in the Ecclesiastical History, agreeing

also in substance, though more detailed and accurate than the relation of the same event by the earlier writer.

St. Herbert is described as a Priest, venerable for the goodness of his life and character; and, whilst his friendship with St. Cuthbert of itself indicates his sanctity, he is even said by the biographers of that Saint, to have almost equalled him in holiness during life, and from the chastening of a long and painful illness, to have attained at death to an equal degree of fitness for future glory. Yet St. Cuthbert became the object of general veneration; Herbert was almost unknown; for the one was called to positions of responsibility and public exertion, and endued with powers and gifts fitting him for them: the other, so far as we know, led a retired life, and was unendued with extraordinary gifts.

Of St. Herbert's earlier history we know nothing. Their friendship makes it probable that he had previously lived where he had had frequent opportunities of intercourse with St. Cuthbert; in the monastery (we might have supposed, but for the absence of any record of him) of Melrose or Lindisfarne, in which, previous to his retirement to solitude, St. Cuthbert's life had been spent, and over which he had successively presided; whilst the expressions of submission used to him by Herbert fall in with the idea that he had been under his authority.

It was, as the metrical life informs us, from the advice of his spiritual friend and guide that he retired to the cell on Derwentwater; and that he had previously been in a religious society, is confirmed by the circumstance that hermits usually were persons who had spent some time in a monastery, and then, like

St. Cuthbert, sought a life which seemed to afford opportunity for a more uninterrupted exercise of devotion and meditation. Some of the most holy men, however, and the greatest fathers of the Church, gave the preference to the life of monks in community, and did not approve of the change to solitude, as depriving a man of the opportunity of forming and exercising the graces of the Christian character, and of benefiting others by his gifts and labours. But, on the other hand, St. Athanasius, one of the most sober and judicious of them, and St. Jerome, the most accomplished, wrote the Lives of the first hermits, St. Antony and St. Hilarion. Perhaps we may say rightly that the eremitical life can never be properly attempted without a special divine inspiration, calling a man to it; and then it is not simply allowable, but a duty. Even then it has often been found expedient not to adopt it without the preparatory discipline of a religious society, to learn self-control, severe hardihood in bearing with privations, humility, submission, and affectionate forgetfulness of self. That such a training had been gone through by St. Herbert, seems implied in his retirement being the consequence of the advice of St. Cuthbert, whose own life had been one of so much active exertion for the good of others; and in the humility and affectionate submission which appear so strongly to have marked his character.

The retreat selected by him was a place secured from sudden or careless interruption, at the northern extremity of an island lying nearly in the centre of the Lake, which is almost five miles long and one and a half in width, and closely surrounded by mountains. The island itself is somewhat less than five acres in extent, and apparently unproductive. The sound of



the waterfalls on shore may be heard from it, swelling soft or loud as borne upon the wind, and it is the very spot which would be chosen by one who wished from one station to study the whole circumference of the Lake and the hills around it. At the same time the low level of its position excludes from view the richer flat grounds which adjoin the Lake, leaving only the more wild and dreary portions of the scene.

It is often remarked that situations of great natural beauty were selected by those who adopted the solitary life; as though the religious mind felt a sympathy with the beauty of the natural objects which surrounded it, as at all times it has delighted to raise up the forms of grace and sublimity in works of art. And yet it seems perhaps more in harmony with the ascetic life to suppose that, though not indifferent to those beauties and unconsciously influenced by them, and willing to speak of them to others, the solitary would rather in his own thoughts recur to the words which reminded him of the time when all these things would be destroyed; and even when he most rejoiced in them, it would be as suggesting the new and more glorious world to which they would give place. "What need to tell," says St. Basil of his own hermitage, "of the exhalations from the earth, or the breezes from the river? Another might admire the multitude of flowers and singing birds, but leisure I have none for such thoughts."

We shall, however, form an inadequate idea of the self-denial of St. Herbert, unless we call to mind the condition of the country to which he retired. It was then occupied by a part of the Cymry, the remains of the British tribes, and formed one of their petty kingdoms. They were indeed subject to the Saxons, but foreigners in language and habits, and separated by the

most bitter hostility. Each nation regarded the other as worse than heathen, and exercised the greatest cruelties towards them. Their Churches were not in communion, and their common faith was forgotten. The Britons in this country are said to have been ecclesiastically subject to St. Kentigern's see of Glasgow, but they seem now to have been in a very ignorant, irreligious, and almost barbarous condition. Nay, a portion of them in the wilds of Cumberland, were actually pagan. The Roman occupation of that district, being for the mere purpose of a frontier against the Picts or Caledonians, had never opened a way for the general conversion and instruction of the inhabitants. Even the professed Christians seem to have mingled heathen customs and usages with their Christianity. It was for a wild country with such inhabitants who would look on a Saxon as a natural enemy, that Herbert exchanged the society of his countrymen, and the intercourse and sympathy of those Religious Houses which were the seats of piety and brotherly love, and the peaceful reward of labour and study. From the difficulties and trials thus incurred, he gained a special right to the title of Confessor by which he is designated in the Martyrologies.

One tie, however, was retained, in a yearly meeting with St. Cuthbert, with whom he then conferred as to his religious state, communicating his failings and infirmities, and receiving directions and advice respecting his everlasting well-being. A similar yearly visit is said to have been made by St. Bega to St. Hilda; and we seem to have a parallel in later times in the friendship of our own Hooker and Saravia, so beautifully described by Walton, who says they were supposed to be Confessors to each other. And such instances suggest the

means of a perfection of friendship among Christians which otherwise could not exist. An unreserved confidence being allowed, under circumstances so sacred as to preclude the danger of familiarly speaking of our faults, and producing the affectionate trust which arises from the thought that all our known wrong doings and failings have been confessed to one who yet loves us and sympathises with us. St. Cuthbert had a singular power of thus influencing others, as Bede states, in speaking of his preaching.

It was probably in the latter part of the year 686, that the last interview of these holy friends took place on earth. And this is the occasion of the mention of St. Herbert in Bede's history, as being an instance of the foreknowledge of the time of his death, vouchsafed to St. Cuthbert.

The Saint had now been more than a year Bishop of Lindisfarne, and was making a second visit to Carlisle, which, with the country fifteen miles round it, had been given him by Egfrid, king of Northumbria. His former visit had been abruptly terminated by the death of the king, and he now returned, at the request of the brethren of his monastery there, to ordain Priests, and to give the religious habit and his benediction to Ermenburga, the widow of Egfrid, who was retiring to the Religious Society at Carlisle, over which her sister presided.

Here, according to his yearly practice, St. Herbert met him, desiring, by his wholesome exhortations, to be more and more inflamed in his affection for heavenly objects. After prayer, as was their rule, whilst they were communing on spiritual subjects and (to adhere to the language of the venerable Bede) were mutually inebriating each other with draughts of heavenly life,

St. Cuthbert desiring (as his metrical life relates) that that day, on which they had been mercifully allowed to meet again, should be spent in the delights of holy converse, said among other things, "Remember at this time, my brother Herbert, to ask and say to me all you wish; for after our parting now we shall not again see each other with the eyes of flesh in this world; for I know that the time of my departure is at hand, and that I must shortly put off this tabernacle."

On this Herbert, falling at his feet, with groans and tears, said, "For our Lord's sake, I beseech you not to leave me, but remember your most faithful companion, and entreat the mercy of Heaven, that we, who have together served him on earth, may pass together to behold his grace and glory in the heavens. You know I have always studied to live according to your direction, and if from ignorance or infirmity I have in any point failed, I have taken pains to chastise and amend my fault according to the decision of your will."

The Bishop bent in prayer, and being immediately informed by the Spirit that his request was granted, said, "Rise up, my brother, and do not mourn, but rather rejoice greatly, for the mercy of Heaven has granted what we asked."

They separated,—St. Cuthbert to his See, which he shortly afterwards resigned, and retired for the few remaining months of his life to the cell in the island of Farne, which he inhabited before his consecration. Herbert to his island. The event verified the promise and prediction. After this separation they never again saw each other with the eyes of the body, but on one and the same day, nay, at one and the same hour—on Wednesday the twentieth of March, 687, their spirits departing from the body were immediately united in

the blessed vision of each other, and by the ministry of angels translated together to the kingdom of Heaven. Herbert, however, as Bede relates, was prepared by long previous illness, from an appointment, we may suppose, of Divine mercy, that in whatever degree he fell short of the merits of the blessed Cuthbert, this might be supplied by the chastening pains of lengthened sickness ; so that equalling the grace of him who had interceded for him, they might, as they had at one and the same time departed from the body, be fitted to be received into one undistinguished dwelling of everlasting bliss.

Seven centuries had almost passed away, and the remembrance of at least this event of St. Herbert's life was lost in the country where he had died : for he was a stranger, and under the alternate dominion of England and Scotland, the people had changed their language and habits, and were still in a poor and illiterate condition, when, A.D. 1374, the then Bishop of Carlisle, Thomas de Appleby, issued a mandate for the yearly commemoration of this event.

He states that in reading sacred books he had met with this narrative in Bede's History, and, conceiving that few if any were acquainted with it, " In order that men might not be ignorant of what the Lord had vouchsafed to reveal for the glory of His Saints," he appointed that on the anniversary of their death, the Vicar of Crosthwaite, the parish in which the Lake lies, should proceed to St. Herbert's Isle, and there celebrate with full chaunting the Mass of St. Cuthbert ; adding an indulgence of forty days to all who should on that day repair thither for devotion in honour of St. Cuthbert, and in remembrance of Herbert. " What a happy holyday must that have been for all these vales !"

says a gifted writer lately taken from us : “and how joyous on a fine spring day must the Lake have appeared with boats and banners from every chapelry !.... and how must the Chapel have adorned that little isle, giving a human and religious character to the solitude !”<sup>1</sup>

The remains of a building are still visible among the wood with which the island is covered, “making the island,” adds Southey, “mere wilderness as it has become, more melancholy.” Hutchinson, the Historian of Cumberland, describes it in his time, fifty years ago, as appearing to consist of two apartments, the outer one about twenty-two feet by sixteen, which probably had been the chapel; the other, of narrower dimensions, the cell. Of this smaller room the traces are almost lost : the walls of the other remain to the height of about three feet from the ground, built in the simple way of the country, of unwrought slaty stones and mortar ; heaps of stones from the building are lying around, and all are now overgrown with ivy, moss, and brambles, and clasped by the roots of trees which have grown upon them.

It is in a state befitting the simplicity and unassuming character of so meek a Saint, who wished to be withdrawn from public notice, and to be little thought of, and whose wishes were fulfilled after death, as in life. His name would have been unreported in history, except to shew the greatness of the revelations made to his friend. It was in honour of St. Cuthbert that the mass was said in the chapel of his isle, and the very document which appoints it abstains from giving him the title of Saint, which is uniformly added to

<sup>1</sup> Southey's Colloquies, vol. ii. p. 35.

the name of Cuthbert: and Herbert is remembered that St. Cuthbert may be honoured.

His name was added to the Martyrology of Usuardus, in Greven's edition, A.D. 1516 to 1521. It is given by Canisius in the German Martyrology, and by Ferrarius in his General Catalogue—following an English Martyrology.

Since in this age we cannot join the yearly pageant on his island, we will keep memory of him in the words of a poet, who is his neighbour, and who has written this inscription for the spot where was his hermitage :—

If thou in the dear love of some one Friend  
Hast been so happy that thou knowest what thoughts  
Will sometimes in the Happiness of Love  
Make the heart sink, then wilt thou reverence  
This quiet spot: and, Stranger! not unmoved  
Wilt thou behold this shapeless heap of stones,  
The desolate ruins of St. Herbert's cell.  
Here stood his threshold; here was spread the roof  
That sheltered him, a self-secluded Man,  
After long exercise in social cares  
And offices humane, intent to adore  
The Deity, with undistracted mind,  
And meditate on everlasting things  
In utter solitude.—But he had left  
A Fellow-labourer, whom the good Man loved  
As his own soul. And, when with eye upraised  
To heaven he knelt before the crucifix,  
While o'er the Lake the cataract of Lodore  
Pealed to his orisons, and when he paced  
Along the beach of this small isle and thought  
Of his Companion, he would pray that both  
(Now that their earthly duties were fulfilled)  
Might die in the same moment. Nor in vain

So prayed he :—as our Chronicles report,  
Though here the Hermit numbered his last day,  
Far from St. Cuthbert, his beloved Friend,  
Those holy Men both died in the same hour.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Wordsworth's Poems, i. 299. ed. 1832.



HISTORY OF  
**St. Edelwald,**

HERMIT AT FARNE,

A.D. 700.

THERE is a small island off the coast of Northumberland, by name Farne, seven miles to the south of the famous Holy Island, or Lindisfarne, and at the distance of two miles from the mainland. It is encompassed by a girdle of rocks, and once contained in it a mound of a circular form, in which there lay a spot of ground about seventy feet across, and to which St. Bede in a passage presently to be quoted, gives the name of "heights," and Camden that of "fortress." Here St. Cuthbert lived a solitary life between his sojourn in the monastery, and his elevation to the see, of Lindisfarne; hither had he come to die; here, according to some accounts, he was originally buried. We are accustomed to consider a hermitage as a rural retreat in a wood, or beside a stream; a wild pretty spot, where the flowers fill the air with sweetness, and the birds with melody. So it often was: and hard indeed it should not be so. Hermits have privations enough without being cut off from the sight of God's own world, the type of glories unseen. However, otherwise thought St. Cuthbert: accordingly he so contrived the wall which circled round his inclosure, as to see nothing

out of doors but the blue sky or the heavy clouds over his head.

Stone walls do not a prison make,  
Nor iron bars a cage;  
Minds innocent and quiet take  
That for a hermitage.

Such was the sentiment of a soldier of this world; the great combatants for the next have fulfilled it more literally as well as more religiously. Edelwald succeeded Cuthbert in this uninviting abode. He had been for many years a monk of Ripon, where St. Wilfred had founded a religious house, and afterwards was buried. Felgeld succeeded Edelwald, and was an old man of seventy in Bede's time, who perhaps on his information has recorded the following anecdote of the Saint in his metrical account of St. Cuthbert's miracles. After mentioning St. Cuthbert and Felgeld, he proceeds :—

Between these comrades dear,  
Zealous and true as they,  
Thou, prudent Ethelwald, didst bear,  
In that high home the sway.

A man, who ne'er, 'tis said,  
Would of his graces tell,  
Or with what arms he triumphed  
Over the Dragon fell.

So down to us hath come  
A memorable word,  
Which in unguarded season from  
His blessed lips was heard.

It chanced that as the Saint  
Drank in with faithful ear  
Of Angel tones the whispers faint,  
Thus spoke a brother dear :

“ O why so many a pause  
Thwarting thy words’ full stream,  
Till her dark line Oblivion draws  
Across the broken theme?”

He answered, “ Till thou seal  
To sounds of earth thine ear,  
Sweet friend, be sure thou ne’er shalt feel  
Angelic voices near.”

But then the Hermit blest  
A sudden change came o’er ;  
He shudders, sobs, and smites his breast,  
Is mute, then speaks once more.

“ O by the Name Most High,  
What I have now let fall,  
Hush, till I lay me down to die,  
And go the way of all.”

Thus did a Saint in fear,  
His gifts celestial hide ;  
Thus did an Angel standing near  
Proclaim them far and wide.

Bede adds that in this respect Edelwald presented a remarkable contrast to St. Cuthbert ; who when commemorating the trials of Christians in former ages, was also in the habit of stating to others the sufferings and graces wrought in himself by the mercy of Christ ;<sup>1</sup> “ thus,” he observes, “ the One Spirit adorned the two men with distinct gifts, and led them on to one kingdom by a different path.”

St. Cuthbert’s hermitage, though sufficiently well contrived to keep out the view of the sea and rocks,

<sup>1</sup> At pia Cuthbertus memorans sæpe acta priorum  
Ætheriâ sub laude, sui quoque Christus agonis  
Ut fuerat socius, suerat subnectere paucis.

and of the cliffs of the neighbouring land, was not equally impervious to wind and water, which are of a ruder nature, and intrude themselves into places where the refined sense of sight and its delicate visions cannot enter. The planks of his cottage parted, and let in the discomforts of the external world without its compensations. The occurrence which grew out of this circumstance brings together the three successive inmates of the place, Cuthbert, Edelwald, and Felgeld, in a very sacred way ; and as it comes to us on good evidence, viz. the report of Bede from the mouth both of Felgeld, and of a common friend of Felgeld and himself, it shall here be given as he has recorded it.<sup>2</sup>

“ Nor do I think,” says Venerable Bede, “ I ought to omit the heavenly miracle which the Divine mercy shewed by means of the ruins of the holy oratory, in which the venerable father went through his solitary warfare in the service of the Lord. Whether it was effected by the merits of the same blessed father Cuthbert, or his successor Ethelwald, a man equally devoted to the Lord, the Searcher of the heart knows best. There is no reason why it may not be attributed to either of the two, in conjunction with the faith of the most holy father Felgeld ; through whom and in whom the miraculous cure, which I mentioned, was effected. He was the third person who became tenant of the same place and its spiritual warfare, and, at present more than seventy years old, is awaiting the end of this life, in expectation of the heavenly one.

“ When therefore God’s servant Cuthbert had been translated to the heavenly kingdom, and Ethelwald had

<sup>2</sup> In vit. St. Cuthb. In the extracts which follow, Dr. Giles’s translation is used with some trifling variations.

commenced his occupation of the same island and monastery, after many years spent in conversation with the monks, he gradually aspired to the rank of anchoritic perfection. The walls of the aforesaid oratory, being composed of planks somewhat carelessly put together, had become loose and tottering by age, and, as the planks separated from one another, an opening was afforded to the weather. The venerable man, whose aim was rather the splendour of a heavenly than of an earthly mansion, having taken hay, or clay, or whatever he could get, had filled up the crevices, that he might not be disturbed from the earnestness of his prayers by the daily violence of the winds and storms. When Ethelwald entered and saw these contrivances, he begged the brethren who came thither to give him a calf's skin, and fastened it with nails in the corner, where himself and his predecessor used to kneel or stand when they prayed, as a protection against the storm.

"Twelve years after, he also ascended to the joys of the heavenly kingdom, and Felgeld became the third inhabitant of the place. It then seemed good to the right reverend Eadfrid, bishop of the Church of Lindisfarne, to restore from its foundation the time-worn oratory. This being done, many devout persons begged of Christ's holy servant Felgeld, to give them a small portion of the relics of God's servant Cuthbert, or of Ethelwald, his successor. He accordingly determined to cut up the above-named calf's skin into pieces, and give a portion to each. But he first experienced its influence in his own person; for his face was much deformed by a swelling and a red patch. The symptoms of this deformity had become manifest long before to the monks, whilst he was dwelling among them. But now that he was living alone, and bestowed less

care on his person, whilst he practised still greater rigidities, and, like a prisoner, rarely enjoyed the sun or air, the malady increased, and his face became one large red swelling. Fearing, therefore, lest he should be obliged to abandon the solitary life and return to the monastery; presuming in his faith, he trusted to heal himself by the aid of those holy men whose house he dwelt in, and whose holy life he sought to imitate; for he steeped a piece of the skin above mentioned in water, and washed his face therewith; whereupon, the swelling was immediately healed, and the cicatrice disappeared. This I was told, in the first instance, by a religious priest of the monastery of Jarrow, who said that he well knew Felgeld's face to have been in the deformed and diseased state which I have described, and that he saw it and felt it with his hand through the window after he was cured. Felgeld afterwards told me the same thing, confirming the report of the priest, and asserting that his face was ever afterwards free from the blemish during the many years that he passed in that place. This he ascribed to the agency of the Almighty grace, which both in this world heals many, and in the world to come will heal all the maladies of our minds and bodies, and, satisfying our desires after good things, will crown us for ever with its mercy and compassion."

It is better to use a contemporary's words than our own, where the former are attainable; for this reason, I make a second quotation from the same revered writer who has furnished the above narrative. The passage occurs in the beginning of the fifth book of the Ecclesiastical History:—

"The venerable Ethelwald," he says, "who had received the priesthood in the monastery of Ripon, and

had, by actions worthy of the same, sanctified his holy office, succeeded the man of God, Cuthbert, in the exercise of a solitary life, having practised the same before he was bishop, in the isle of Farne. For the certain demonstration of the life which he led, and his merit, I will relate one miracle of his, which was told me by one of these brothers for and on whom the same was wrought: viz. Guthfrid, the venerable servant and priest of Christ, who afterwards, as abbot, presided over the brethren of the same church of Lindisfarne, in which he had been educated.

“ ‘I came,’ says he, ‘to the island of Farne, with two others of the brethren to speak with the most reverend father, Ethelwald. Having been refreshed with his discourse, and taken his blessing, as we were returning home, on a sudden, when we were in the midst of the sea, the fair weather which was wafting us over was checked, and there ensued so great and dismal a tempest, that neither the sails nor oars were of any use to us, nor had we any thing to expect but death. After long struggling with the winds and waves to no effect, we looked behind us, to see whether it were practicable at least to recover the island from whence we came, but we found ourselves on all sides so enveloped in the storm, that there was no hope of escaping. But looking out as far as we could see, we observed, on the island of Farne, father Ethelwald, beloved of God, come out of his cavern to watch our course; for, hearing the noise of the storm and raging sea, he was come out to see what would become of us. When he beheld us in distress and despair, he bowed his knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, in prayer for our life and safety; upon which, the swelling sea was calmed, so that the storm ceased on all

sides, and a fair wind attended us to the very shore. When we had landed, and had dragged upon the shore the small vessel that brought us, the storm, which had ceased a short time for our sake, immediately returned, and raged continually during the whole day ; so that it plainly appeared that the brief cessation of the storm had been granted by Heaven, at the request of the man of God, in order that we might escape.' ”

Edelwald lived twelve years in his (to human eyes) dreary and forlorn abode ; dreary and forlorn, most assuredly, if he had no companions, no converse, no subjects of thought, besides those which the external world supplied to him. On his death A.D. 699 or 700, his remains were taken to Lindisfarne, and buried by the side of his master, St. Cuthbert. Here they remained for near two centuries, when the ravages of the Danes in the neighbourhood frightened the holy household ; and Erdulf, Bishop, and Edred, Abbot of Lindisfarne, migrated with the bodies of their saints to the mainland. For a hundred years, the sacred relics of Oswald, Aidan, Cuthbert, Bede, Edbert, Edfrid, Ethelwold, and Edelwald, had no settled habitation ; but on the transference of the see from Lindisfarne to Durham, at the end of the tenth century, they were brought home again, under the shadow of the new Cathedral. There they remained till the changes of the sixteenth century, when, with the relics of Cuthbert, Bede, Aidan, and the rest, they disappeared.



A LEGEND OF

St. Bettelin,

HERMIT, AND PATRON OF STAFFORD,

TOWARDS A.D. 800.

BRIGHT luminaries in the heavens, which guide the traveller across the desert, are found, when viewed through a glass, to be double stars, not single, though each seems to be one. Suns which reign separately in their separate systems, far apart from each other, mingle their rays, as we see them, and blend their colours, and are called by one name. They are confused, yet they are used by the wayfaring man, who is not hurt by his mistake.

So it is with the beacon light which the seaman dimly discerns from afar. It has no definite outline, and occupies no distinct spot in the horizon; it cannot be located amid the haze and gloom, but it gives him direction and confidence.

So is it with his landmarks by day; one, two, three high trees are set on a hill,—nay, when close, we can count a dozen, yet in the distance they look like one, nor can we persuade ourselves that they are many. What matters it to those who are tossing at sea, so long as they remind them of the green home which they are approaching, and shape their course towards it?

And so with the herbs of the field; we call them simples, and we use them in medicine as such, and they do certainly put disease and pain to flight. Yet they are compounded of many elements, and some of these, not the whole plant, is the true restorative. Often we do not know that this is the case; but, even when we do, we are not nearer to the knowledge of what the healing element is, or how it may be detached and used separately. We cannot extract the true virtue of the medicine from the impure drug, and we think it better to administer it in combination with other elements which may be useless, or even inconvenient, than to wait till we can duly analyze it.

And to take a more sacred instance, and more closely connected with the subject to which these remarks are tending. It has before now happened, that profane or fanatical violence has broken in upon the relics of the Saints, and scattered them over land and water, or mixed them with the dust of the earth, or even with the mouldering bones of common men, nay of heretics and sinners. Yet could it not destroy the virtue of the relics; it did but disperse and conceal them. They did *more*, they were seen *less*. What says St. Basil about the Forty Martyrs, who were burned, and whose relics were cast into the river, in the Licinian persecution? "These are they who have taken occupation of this our country, as a chain of fortresses, and secure her against hostile invasion, not throwing themselves upon one point, but quartered upon many homes and the ornament of many places."

And what the malice of foes has done to the bodies of the Saints, the inadvertence or ignorance of friends has too often done to their memories. Through the twilight of ages,—in the mist of popular credulity or enthu-

siasm,—amid the ambitious glare of modern lights, darkening what they would illustrate,—the stars of the firmament gleam feebly and fitfully; and we see a something divine, yet we cannot say what it is: we cannot say what, or where, or how it is, without uttering a mistake. There is no room for the exercise of reason—we are in the region of faith. We must believe and act, where we cannot discriminate; we must be content to take the history as sacred on the whole, and leave the verification of particulars, as unnecessary for devotion, and for criticism impossible.

This applies of course in no small degree to the miraculous incidents which occur in the history of the Saints. “Since what is extraordinary,” says Bollandus, “usually strikes the mind and is impressed on the memory in an especial way, it follows that writers about the Saints at times have been able to collect together nothing but their miracles, their virtues and other heavenly endowments being altogether forgotten; and these miracles, often so exaggerated or deformed (as the way of men is) with various adjuncts and circumstances, that by some persons they are considered as nothing short of old women’s tales. Often the same miracles are given to various persons; and though God’s unbounded goodness and power certainly need not refuse this Saint the same favour which He has already bestowed upon that, (for He applies the same chastisements and punishments to the sins of various persons) yet what happened to one has often in matter of fact been attributed to others, first by word of mouth, then in writing, through fault of the faculty of memory, which is but feeble and easily confused in the case of the many; so that when inquiries are made about a Saint, they attribute to him what they remem-

ber to have heard at some time of another, especially since the mind is less retentive of names than of things. In this way, then, while various writers at one and the same time have gone by popular fame, because there were no other means of information, it has come to pass that a story has been introduced into the history of various Saints, which really belongs to one only, and to him perhaps not in the manner in which it is reported.

“Moreover it often happens that, without denying that a certain miracle may have occurred, yet the occasion and mode of its occurrence, as reported, may reasonably create a doubt whether this particular condescension, be it to man’s necessity or his desire, became the majesty of the Eternal. At the same time, since His goodness is wonderful, and we are not able to measure either the good things which He has prepared in heaven for the holy souls He loves, or the extent of His favours towards them on earth, such narratives are not to be rejected at hazard, though they seem to us incredible; but rather to be reverently received, in that they profess to issue from that Fountain of Divine goodness, from which all our happiness must be derived. Suppose the very things were not done; yet great things might have been done, and have been done at other times. Beware then of denying them on the ground that they could not or ought not to have been done.”

These remarks apply among others to St. Bettelin, whose brief history is now to be given, though miracles are not its characteristic. He is the Patron of the town of Stafford, where he was once held in great honour; but little certain is known of him, down to his very name. Various writers speak of Bet-

telin, Beccelin, Barthelm, Bertelin ; whether he owned all these at once, or whether but some of them, whether a portion of his history belongs to another person, or whether it is altogether fabulous, is not known. A life of him has come down to us, which is attributed to Alexander, a Prior of Canons Regular of St. Augustine, in the beginning of the thirteenth century ; but, though this Prior is well spoken of, little credit can be placed in the letter of its statements. Two other writers, Ingulphus and Felix, contain incidental mention of him, which is more trustworthy. We will put these notices together, under the guidance of the learned Suyskin, the Bollandist.

Bettelin was a disciple of St. Guthlake's, in the eighth century, and one of four who followed him in a hermit's life, in the island of Croyland, on the southern border of Lincolnshire. Cissa had been a pagan, of noble blood and great in the world ; but had left all to follow Christ and St. Guthlake, and succeeded him as Abbot. Till the Danes came he lay in a high marble tomb, on the right of his spiritual father in the Abbey of Croyland. Egbert was more in St. Guthlake's confidence than any of his brethren ; he may have been his confessor. Tatwin had formerly been ferryman at the passage from the mainland to the Island. These, with Bettelin, who made the fourth, and came nearer the Saint's person than the rest, lived in separate cottages, close to Guthlake's oratory and under his guidance. All this we learn from Ingulphus, himself Abbot of Croyland, towards the end of the eleventh century.

Something of a painful and a guilty nature hangs over the first years of Bettelin ; legend and history agree in testifying as much as this. It is sometimes

said that no story is without foundation ; and at any rate this maxim is so often true as to make it fair in a particular case to be biassed *primâ facie* by such reports as are in circulation, though in details or in the letter they may be simply untrue. Thus an alleged fact against a man's character may be clearly disproved, and yet may be the spontaneous result of a general and prevalent impression founded on real facts. A statesman may in his day be popularly considered timid, when he is but prudent, or crafty, when he is but far-seeing ; or a monarch indulging and paternal, though he is weak ; or a commander cruel and relentless, because he is stern in manner and determined in purpose. Here is a basis of truth, and a superstructure of error. A rumour is spread that political parties are breaking up, or that some illustrious person is estranged, or that some foreign influence is at work in high places. It may be formally and totally and truly contradicted ; it may be possible to explain it, to shew how it originated, to refer it to the malice or the impertinence of this or that individual : and yet, though not a truth, it may be the shadow of a truth, unsubstantial, yet attached to it, the exponent of facts which discover themselves in the event. And in like manner the author of a marvellous Life may be proved to a demonstration to be an ignorant, credulous mouk, or a literary or ecclesiastical gossip ; to be preaching to us his dreams, or to have saturated himself with popular absurdities ; he may be cross-examined, and made to contradict himself ; or his own story, as it stands, may be self-destructive ; and yet he may be the index of a hidden fact, and may symbolize a history to which he does not testify.

Now as to St. Bettelin ;—some cloud, it has been said, hung about his early years, which made him ever

after a penitent. A wild extravagant tale is recorded by Prior Alexander. We are told how that he was a king's son, and noble in person, and a good Catholic; and how he shrunk from the licence of his father's court; and how, to preserve his purity, he went over to Ireland, where he was received by a certain king or chieftain, who had a fair daughter; and how in a strange land he found the temptation, and fell beneath the sin, which had frightened him from his own. He carried off his beautiful mistress to England, and sought for shelter and concealment in the woods. A wretched childbirth followed, and a tragical issue. While the father was seeking assistance, wolves devoured mother and infant. Bettelin remained a penitent in the wild; till St. Guthlake, who was leaving Repton in Derbyshire, where he had entered into both clerical and monastic orders, took him with him to Croyland.

Such is the fable; but it so happens that we seem to be able to produce in this instance the real facts of the case, of which it is but the symbol and record; and though very different from the above, yet they are so far like it, as, alas! to be even more criminal and dreadful than it. One Felix, a contemporary of St. Guthlake, wrote the life of the latter, shortly after his death, from the information of the Saint's disciples. Among these was Bettelin; from him, who was at that time living with St. Guthlake on the most familiar terms, Felix learned the account of St. Guthlake's last days upon earth. Now Felix also tells us, in an earlier passage of the Saint's life, what the crime of Bettelin was; and, as it would appear, from Bettelin's own mouth; for there was no one else to tell him. If this be so, we have both a warrant for the authenticity of the story, and a great evidence of St. Bettelin's humility.

“There was a certain clerk,” says Felix, “by name Beccelin, who offered himself for a servant to that great man St. Guthlake, and proposed to live to God holily, under his training. Into this person’s heart the evil spirit entered, and began to puff him up with the pestilential conceits of vain glory; and next, after he had thus seduced him, he proceeded to suggest to him to seize the deadly weapon, and to kill the master, under whose training he had begun to live to God, with the object, after taking him off, of succeeding to his place, and receiving the veneration of kings and princes. Accordingly, on a day when the aforementioned clerk had come, (as he was wont on the twentieth day,) to shave Guthlake, the man of God, afflicted by monstrous madness, and thirsting with exceeding desire for his blood, he made up his mind to murder him.

“Then the Saint of God, Guthlake, to whom the Lord did never fail to impart a prescience of things to come, having cognizance of the guilt of this new wickedness, began to question him. ‘O, my Beccelin!’ he said, ‘why under this carnal breast hidest thou the old enemy? Why not vomit forth these pestilential waters of bitter poison? For I know that thou art deceived by the evil spirit; wherefore confess the guilty meditations which our enemy, the accuser of the human race, has sown within you, and turn away from them.’ On this, Beccelin, understanding that he had been seduced by the evil spirit, cast himself at holy Guthlake’s feet, acknowledging his sin with tears, and humbly asking pardon. And the man of blessed memory not only forgave him the fault, but even promised him his aid in future troubles.”

Thus speaks a contemporary author, who knew the



parties ; and it is certainly a remarkable passage in St. Guthlake's history, though that does not here concern us, that through life, up to his very death-bed, he was waited on in his bed-room by one who had all but turned the barber's razor into a weapon for his destruction. There is nothing to shew that Bettelin did not continue to shave him, as before this occurrence. As to Bettelin himself, this part of his history reminds us of St. Brice, though the offence of the latter was of a far less serious die. Brice succeeded St. Martin in the see of Tours ; but in St. Martin's life-time, his proud boyish spirit shewed itself in a scorn and ridicule of the Saint, which approached to the sin of the children who mocked Elisha.

If Bettelin was called to a stern penitence for this great sin, his master, who was to have been the victim of the sin, became a pattern for the penitence. " Recollecting," says Prior Alexander, " that the ancient fathers went about their deserts in sheep-skins and goat skins, not in linen or cloth, but made use of goat-skins, raw and untanned, conforming themselves also to our first parents, who, on their rejection from the paradise of pleasure, received from God coats made of skins, and knowing that the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, they lived on barley bread and muddy water, with great abstinence." On St. Guthlake's death, Bettelin took the news, by the Saint's previous directions, to St. Bega, Guthlake's sister.

What happened to Bettelin after that event does not clearly appear. Ingulphus says that he remained and died in Croyland ; and he speaks of the marble tomb, which contained his relics, as well as Cissa's near St. Cuthbert, in the Abbey of Croyland. And this is not incompatible altogether with the legend

which connects him with the town of Stafford, and which is as follows :—

Where the town now stands, the river Sow formed in those times an island which was called Bethney. Here St. Bettelin stationed himself for some years, and led a life so holy, that the place which profited by his miraculous gifts in his lifetime, grew into a town under his patronage after his death.

A wild, yet not unpleasing, fable is left us as a record of the Saint's history in this retreat. He had concealed his name when he took possession of the island ; and on his father's death, who was king of those parts, the usurper of St. Bettelin's throne determined, without knowing who he was, and from inbred hatred, as it appears, of religion, to eject him from his island hermitage. However, perhaps the romantic narrative which is now coming will run better in rhyme ; so we set off thus :—

St. Bettelin's wonted prayers are o'er  
And his matins are all said,  
Why kneeleth he still on his clay-cold floor  
By the side of his iron bed ?  
Ah ! well may he kneel to Christ in prayer,  
For nought is around him but woe and fear ;  
By to-morrow's sun the Saint must roam  
Far from his cell and his long-loved home.  
But who would drive this hermit good  
From his islet home and his rough old wood ?  
He is no man who hath sought the wild  
In a wayward mood like a frolicsome child,  
Who hath wandered away from his mother's side  
Deep in the merry greenwood to hide.  
A golden crown he had cast away  
To watch all night and to fast all day ;

He was of those whom the Lord doth drive  
To the weary wild with devils to strive,  
For the banner'd Cross must be every where,  
Wherever the fiend doth make his lair,  
And devils trembled and angels smil'd  
When the hermit knelt in the weary wild;  
While the peasant arose his beads to tell  
When the hermit rang his vesper bell.  
But what hath the world to do with him,  
That it grudgeth his home by the river's brim?  
Hath it not woods and streams at will?  
But so it hath been and it must be still.  
Earth may be broad and its bosom wide,  
But the world cannot rest with the cross by its side:  
And the king hath said with a scornful smile,  
"The hermit hath chosen a fair green isle,  
By the river clasp'd around;  
And the turf is soft round his sweet chapelle,  
I warrant too he sleepeth well  
To that gushing river's sound;  
A Saint should not dwell in so fair a scene;  
And that river sweet with its islet green,  
I swear by high heaven it shall be mine  
In spite of this hermit St. Betteline."  
And he bade the hermit prove his right  
To his islet home in a deadly fight,  
And if no champion can be found  
He must quit by to-morrow his holy ground.  
And who is there for Christ the Lord  
To don his armour and draw his sword?  
And will not a knight put lance in rest  
To do this hermit's poor behest?  
If for Christ they will not fight,  
Foul shame on England's chivalry,  
Their dancing plume and armour bright  
Are but summer pageantry.  
But let the worldlings pass along,  
A Saint in prayer is wondrous strong.  
"Lord," he saith, "I do not grieve  
This sweet place for aye to leave,

For if Thy love abide with me,  
Barren cliff or flowery lea,  
All is well that pleaseth Thee ;  
But for Thy glory's sake arise,  
Cast down the strong, confound the wise."  
He rose from his knee, and then there stole  
A low sweet voice to his inmost soul,—

“ Man to Saints and Angels dear,  
Christ in heaven hath heard thy prayer.”  
Oh ! how that whisper deep and calm,  
Dropp'd on his weary heart like balm.  
Then St. Betteline rose, for the morning red  
Through his lattic'd window was sweetly shed.  
On the red-tipped willow the dew-drop gloweth,  
At his feet the happy river floweth,  
And sweetly the lightly-passing breeze  
Bendeth the wood anemones,  
And all things seemed to his heart to tell,  
Thou shalt ring again thy chapel bell.  
Then a man rode up to his lowly door,  
One he had never seen before,  
A low mean man, and his armour bright  
Look'd all too large for his frame so slight ;  
But his eye was clear and his voice was sweet,  
And it made St. Betteline's bosom beat  
As he spoke, and thus his greeting ran,—  
“ In the name of the Holy Trinity,  
Hermit I come to fight for thee.”  
“ Now Christ bless thee, thou little man,”  
'Twas thus St. Betteline said,  
And he murmur'd, as meekly he bow'd his head,  
“ The brightest sword may be stain'd with rust,  
The horse and his rider be flung to the dust,  
But in Christ alone I put my trust.”  
And then to the lists together they hied,  
Where the king was seated in pomp and in pride,  
And the courtiers cried with a merry shout,  
“ The hermit hath brought us a champion stout.”  
But, hark ! through the forest a trumpet rang,  
All harshly it rose with a dissonant clang

It had a wild and unearthly tone,  
It seem'd by no Christian warrior blown,  
And into the lists came a giant form  
On a courser as black as a gathering storm ;  
His vizor was clos'd, and no mortal sight  
E'er saw the face of this wondrous wight,  
But his red eye glow'd through that iron shroud,  
As the lightning doth rend a midnight cloud ;  
So sable a knight and courser, I ween,  
In merry England never were seen ;  
A paynim knight he seem'd to be,  
From a Moorish country beyond the sea.  
Then loud laugh'd the giant as on he came  
With his armour bright and his eye of flame,  
And he look'd on his rival full scornfully,  
For he hardly came up to the giant's knee ;  
His vizor was up and it shew'd to view  
His fair long hair and his eye of blue ;  
Instead of a war-horse he did bestride  
A palfrey white which a girl might ride ;  
But on his features there gleam'd the while  
That nameless grace and unearthly smile,  
Stern, yet as holy virgin's faint,  
Which good old monks have lov'd to paint  
On the wan visage of a Soldier Saint.  
And his trumpet tone rung loud and clear  
With a thrilling sound on the 'wilder'd ear,  
And each bad man in his inmost heart,  
He knew not why, gave a sudden start.  
The paynim had laugh'd with a scornful sound  
As he look'd for an easy prey,  
And he wheel'd his gallant courser round  
And address'd him to the fray.  
But what hath the dwarfish warrior done ?  
He hath sat like a warrior carv'd in stone,  
He mov'd not his head or his armed heel,  
He mov'd not his hand to grasp the steel.  
His long lance was pointing upwards still,  
And the wind as it mov'd his banner at will

Shew'd work'd on the folds an image good,  
The spotless lamb and the holy rood.  
But men say that his stature so dwarfish and small,  
None could tell how, seem'd stately and tall,  
And all at once on his foe he turn'd  
A face that with hidden lustre burn'd ;  
Ah ! what aileth thee now, thou sable knight ?  
Hath that trumpet tone unnerv'd thee quite  
That the spear doth shake in thy hand for fear ?  
The courser is stopp'd in his wild career,  
And the rider is rolling afar on the ground ;  
His armour doth ring with a hollow sound,  
From the bars of his vizor a voice is heard,  
But no man could tell that fearful word,  
'Twas the cry of a fiend in agony,  
Then vanish'd from earth his steed and he ;  
The black knight had fallen before the glance  
Of that angelic countenance.  
But how hath the angel vanish'd away ?  
Oh ! how he went no mortal could say,  
But a wild shriek rung through the misty air,  
And each man said to his neighbour in fear  
" St. Michael hath smitten the fiend with his spear."

What makes the legend still more extravagant is, that the miracle does not seem to have answered the purpose of maintaining St. Bettelin in his insular position. For the Saint, in Plot's words, " disturbed by some that envied his happiness, removed into some desert mountainous places, where he ended his life, leaving Bethnei to others, who afterwards built it, and called it Stafford, there being a shallow place in the river hereabout, that could easily be passed with the help of a staff only." Ethelfleda built Stafford, the widow of Ethelred, earl of Mercia, in 918. " Now whereabouts," Plot continues, " this desert place should

be, that St. Bertelline went to, though histories are silent, yet I have some grounds to think that it might be about Throwley, Ilam, and Dovedale; and that this was the St. Bertram who has a well, an ash, and a tomb at Ilam."

Yet, after all, some facts are needed, to account for the honour in which St. Bettelin was held at Stafford. Those facts, however, are not found in history. We know little or nothing more, than that he was the patron of the town, where a Church was built under his invocation. The fame of miracles would of course explain an increase of devotion shewn to him there, could we once trace the circumstances which first introduced his name ecclesiastically into the place.

Of these miracles wrought in his Church, the record of one remains, appended at a later date to the history of Prior Alexander, and its matter-of-fact tone curiously contrasts with the wild fable already related, which goes immediately before it.

"There was," says the anonymous writer, "in the town of Stafford, a man named Willmot, a cook by trade. This man, for many years, almost sixteen, had lost his sight, so as not to be able to go out of doors without some one to lead him. At length, after many years, he was brought to St. Bertellin's Church in the same town, for the purpose of recovery; and while he knelt in prayer, before the altar of St. Bertellin, and the priest, whose name was John Chrostias, offered up the Eucharist in the mass to the Supreme Father, the aforementioned blind man regained his sight, and first saw that Venerable Sacrament, rendering thanks to the Supreme God, who had renewed His ancient miracles, for the love of blessed Bertellin. This miracle took place in the year of our Lord 1386."

And this is all that is known, and more than all,—yet nothing to what the angels know,—of the life of a servant of God, who sinned and repented, and did penance and washed out his sins, and became a Saint, and reigns with Christ in heaven.



## A

# Legend of St. Neot.

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### INTRODUCTION.

It is not pretended that every fact in the following Legend can be supported on sound historical evidence. With the materials which we have, it would not only be presumptuous, but impossible, to attempt to determine any thing with any certainty, respecting them; how much is true, how much fiction. It is enough that we find them in the writings of men who were far better able to know the certainty of what they said than we can be. At the same time, there are certain features in the authorities to which we refer, which seem to call for some particular notice. There are five old Lives of St. Neot extant; one in Saxon, dating about a hundred and fifty years after his death; the others, in Latin, written at various subsequent periods. Now of these, the first thing we remark is a striking disagreement in the details of the several narratives. The same sharp clear outline of a character is preserved throughout, but the filling up of the picture seems to vary with the taste and purpose of the writer. The Saxon Life gives one miracle; the early Latin Lives give others; while Ramsay of Croyland, the only one

of them who proposes to relate *ascertained facts*, omits all except the last appearance in the battle at Ethendun, and acknowledges openly that, however true the Cornish Legends may be, he cannot find sufficient evidence to justify him in giving them a place in a History constructed as his. Further, while all the others have fallen into the grave anachronism of placing St. Dunstan at Glastonbury, at the period of St. Neot's residence there, Ramsay alone has avoided this. Now of course this sort of scrupulousness infinitely enhances the value of his testimony for what he does say; but it also indicates a doubt on his part, of the entire credibility in all their parts of his materials. And we observe again, of the other Lives, that all their facts are related with extreme minuteness and accuracy of detail. Now this, if not the highest evidence in their favour, (which it may be) would seem to indicate that they allowed themselves a latitude in their narratives, and made free use of their imagination to give poetic fulness to their compositions. In other words, their Lives are not so much strict biographies, as myths, edifying stories compiled from tradition, and designed not so much to relate facts, as to produce a religious impression on the mind of the hearer. Under the most favourable circumstances, it is scarcely conceivable that uninspired men could write a faithful history of a miraculous life. Even ordinary history, except mere annals, is all more or less fictitious; that is, the facts are related, not as they really happened, but as they appeared to the writer; as they happen to illustrate his views or support his prejudices. And if this is so of common facts, how much more so must it be when all the power of the marvellous is thrown in to stimulate the imagination. But to see fully the

difficulties under which the writers of these Lives must have laboured, let us observe a few of the ways in which we all, and time for us, treat the common history and incidents of life.

First ; We all write Legends. Little as we may be conscious of it, we all of us continually act on the very same principle which made the Lives of Saints such as we find them ; only perhaps less poetically.

Who has not observed in himself, in his ordinary dealings with the facts of every-day life, with the sayings and doings of his acquaintance, in short, with every thing which came before him as a *fact*, a disposition to forget the real order in which they appear, and re-arrange them according to his theory of how they ought to be ? Do we hear of a generous self-denying action, in a short time the real doer and it are forgotten ; it has become the property of the noblest person we know ; so a jest we relate of the wittiest person, frivolity of the most frivolous, and so on ; each particular act we attribute to the person we conceive most likely to have been the author of it. And this does not arise from any wish to leave a false impression scarcely from carelessness ; but only because facts refuse to remain bare and isolated in our memory ; they will arrange themselves under some law or other ; they must illustrate something to us—some character—some principle—or else we forget them. Facts are thus perpetually, so to say, becoming unfixed and re-arranged in a more conceptional order. In this way, we find fragments of Jewish history in the Legends of Greece, stories from Herodotus become naturalized in the tradition of early Rome ; and the mythic exploits of the northern heroes, adopted by the biographers of our Saxon kings. So, uncertain traditions of miracles,

with vague descriptions of name and place, are handed down from generation to generation, and each set of people, as they pass into their minds, naturally group them round the great central figure of their admiration or veneration, be he hero or be he saint. And so with the great objects of national interest. Alfred—"England's darling"—the noblest of the Saxon kings, became mythic almost before his death; and forthwith, every institution that Englishmen most value, of law or church, became appropriated to him. He divided England into shires; he established trial by jury; he destroyed wolves, and made the country so secure, that golden bracelets hung untouched in the open road. And when Oxford was founded, a century was added to its age; and it was discovered that Alfred had laid the first stone of the first college, and that St. Neot had been the first Professor of Theology.

2. Again even in these unpoetical times, go where we will among the country villages, and we still find superstition strong as ever, we must still confess that the last victory of civilization is not yet won, and romance is yet lingering in the embrace of nature. The wild moor, the rock, the river, and the wood, have still their legend, and the Fairy and the Saint yet find a home when the earth is wild and beautiful. Of course they will go with light and modern education, and perhaps it is as well that it should be so. Even Plato finds that Boreas and Orithuia is an allegory. But it may still be asked whether there are not times when the most civilized, the most enlightened philosopher, looking at Nature as he has to do through his knowledge of Law, and Theory, and Principle, has not experienced very strange sensations in scenes of striking beauty, in a thunder storm, or at the sight of the most

familiar place in the light of an unusual sky? Who is there that has searched and explored and dwindled as he searched so low as never with Wordsworth —

—— to have “ felt a sense sublime  
Of something far more deeply interfused,  
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
And the round ocean, and the living air,  
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man.  
A motion and a spirit that impels  
All thinking things, all objects of all thought  
And rolls through all things —— ”

If there be any with power of mind so great that they can keep these deep emotions fresh and pure, and yet leave them purely spiritual, let them do so. Such is not the lot of ordinary men. For them at least Plotinus expressed the very condition of their apprehending them at all when he said, “ that those only could be said to have realized the spiritual, who had clothed it in form of sense.” And so ever children, and child-like ages, who make up for the want of vigour in the understanding by the strength of their faith and the fervour of poetry and imagination, go out and robe these vanishing feelings in shape and colour. The old Greeks saw Naiads sporting in every fountain, and when the breezes played among the branches of the forest, they heard the Zephyrs whispering to the Dryads ; and the Legends of Saints which still cling to the scenes of their earthly glory, are but Christian expressions of the same human instinct.

And those illusions, which excite the scorn  
Or move the pity of unthinking minds,  
Are they not mainly outward ministers  
Of Inward Conscience ? with whose service charged

They come and go, appeared and disappear ;  
Diverting evil purposes, remorse  
Awakening, chastening an intemperate grief  
Or pride of heart abating : and whene'er  
For less important ends those phantoms move,  
Who would forbid them if their presence serve  
Among wild mountains and unpeopled heaths,  
Filling a space else vacant to exalt  
The form of Nature and enlarge her powers.<sup>1</sup>

3. Time in another way plays strange tricks with facts, and is ever altering, shifting, and even changing their nature in our memory. Every man's past life is becoming mythic to him ; we cannot call up again the feelings of our childhood, only we know that what then seemed to us the bitterest misfortunes, we have since learnt by change of character or circumstance, to think very great blessings ; and even when there is no change, and were they to recur again, they are such as we should equally repine at, yet by mere lapse of time sorrow is turned to pleasure, and the sharpest pang at present becomes the most alluring object of our retrospect. The sick bed, the school trial, loss of friends, pain and grief of every kind, become rounded off and assume a soft and beautiful grace. " Time dissipates to shining æther the hard angularity of facts ;" the harshest of them are smoothed and chastened off in the past like the rough mountains and jagged rocks in the distant horizon. And so it is with every other event of our lives ; read a letter we wrote ten years ago, and how impossible we find it to recognize the writer in our altered selves. Incident after incident rises up and bides its day, and then sinks back into the landscape.

<sup>1</sup> Wordsworth, vol. vi. p. 145.

It changes by distance, and we change by age. While it was present it meant one thing, now it means another, and to-morrow perhaps something else on the point of vision alters. Even old nature endlessly and patiently reproducing the same forms, the same beauties cannot reproduce in us the same emotions we remember in our childhood. Then all was Fairy-land; now time and custom have deadened our sense, and

The things which we have seen we now can see no more.

This is the true reason why men people past ages with the superhuman and the marvellous. They feel their own past was indeed something miraculous, and they cannot adequately represent their feelings except by borrowing from another order of beings.

Thus age after age springs up, and each succeeds to the inheritance of all that went before it; but each age has its own feelings, its own character, its own necessities; therefore receiving the accumulations of literature and history, it absorbs and fuses and remodels them to meet the altered circumstances. The histories of Greece and Rome are not yet exhausted, every new historian finds something more in them. Alcibiades and Catiline are not to us what they were to Thucydides and Sallust, even though we use their eyes to look at them. So it has been with facts, and so it always shall be. It holds with the lives of individuals, it holds with histories even where there is contemporary writing, and much more than either, when as with many of the Lives of the Saints, we can only see them as they appeared through the haze of several generations with no other light but oral tradition.

And with the subject of the present memoir there is

yet a further difficulty. The authority for the Cornish Miracles, at least the early ones, is only the word of his servant Barius. Now all accounts agree that St. Neot strictly charged him to mention none of them until his death, so that at any rate a long period must have elapsed before they could be committed to writing at all. Whether this was done however by any one before the Saxon Life which we have was written, it is impossible to tell. The writer makes no mention of any other source but tradition. There may or may not have been memorials preserved in the monastery; but if not the very earliest written account cannot date earlier than a hundred and fifty years after his death.

Thus stands the case then. A considerable period has elapsed from the death of a Saint, and certain persons undertake to write an account of his very remarkable life. We cannot suppose them ignorant of the general difficulties of obtaining evidence on such subjects; what materials they worked with we have no means of ascertaining; they do not mention any. Now supposing them really to have been so vague as they seem, let us ask ourselves what we should have done under similar circumstances. Of course we should attempt no more than what we do as it is,—if we could not write a Life we should write a Legend. And it is mere assumption to take for granted that either they or any other under similar circumstances ever intended more. And this view seems confirmed if we look to their purpose. The monks of the middle ages were not mere dry annalists, who strung together hard catalogues of facts for the philosophers of modern Europe to analyze and distil and resolve into principles. Biography and history were with them simple and direct methods of teaching character. After all, the facts of a man's



life are but a set of phænomena, frail weary weeds in which the idea of him clothes itself. Endless as the circumstances of life are, the forms in which the same idea may develope itself, given a knowledge of the mechanic forces, and we can calculate the velocities of bodies under any conceivable condition. The smallest arc of a curve is enough for the mathematician to complete the figure. Take the character therefore and the powers of a man for granted, and it is very ignorant criticism to find fault with a writer because he embodies them in this or that fact, unless we can be sure he intended to leave a false impression.

What we have been saying then comes to this. Here are certain facts put before us, of the truth or falsehood of which we have no means of judging. We know that such things have happened frequently both among the Jews and in the history of the Church; and therefore there is no *a priori* objection to them. On the other hand we are all disposed to be story tellers; it is next to impossible for tradition to keep facts together in their original form for any length of time; and in those days at any rate there was a strong poetical as well as religious feeling among the people. Therefore as the question, "were these things really so?" cannot be answered, it is no use to ask it. What we should ask ourselves is, Have these things a meaning? Do they teach *us* any thing? If they do, then as far as we are concerned, it is no matter whether they are true or not as facts; if they do not, then let them have all the sensible evidence of the events of yesterday, and they are valueless.

A few remarks on the other authorities which we have quoted, shall conclude this already too long preface.

The appearance at St. Peter's church at York is related in one of Alcuin's letters ; it is only a fragment however, and preserved by William of Malmesbury, who is the only authority for its genuineness. The story of the enchanted raven is told by Asser, and is in that part of his work which has never been questioned ; the long passage however which is translated relating to Alfred and St. Neot, there are some doubts about, as it is not found in the earliest manuscript. That Ragnar Lodbrog was murdered by Ella, and not in East Anglia (as the Lives of St. Edmund say,) is concluded from the *Quida Lodbrokar*, supposed to be the composition of Aslauga, and the unanimous voice of the Danish historians.

What authority Ramsay had before him when writing his Life does not appear. It seems clear however from the way in which he speaks, that he had such (beyond what has come down to us), at least for the Ethendun miracle. His account of this is entirely supported by Nicholas Harpsfeld, who makes long extracts from certain Annals of Winton. But of these Annals nothing is now known. They cannot be found, nor is it known what or where they were.

Dr. Whitaker seems successfully to have proved the identity of St. Neot and Prince Athelstan of Kent. All the Old Lives state positively that Neot was the eldest son of Ethelwulf. That in Latin verse (the oldest of the Latin Lives) that he was brought up a soldier. Again, all the old historians agree that Ethelwulf had but five sons. Athelstan by an early marriage ; Alfred and his three brothers by a late. These four last sat successively on the throne of England, and were buried at Winton. Athelstan remains alone unaccounted for. He disappears at once after the great battle of Sand-

wich, in 851. Dr. Whitaker's elaborate Life of St. Neot however will abundantly supply any further curiosity on this subject, as well as on the other very controverted one, the removal of the relics into Huntingdonshire, which we have not alluded to, not as questioning the fact, but because it is of no interest except to an Antiquarian.

## Legend of St. Neot.

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### SECTION I.

#### PRINCE ATHELSTAN.

THE stars shone out on the bay of Sandwich, and the song of revelry and mirth had succeeded to the war-cry and the din of the battle. Twenty thousand Northmen lay dead and dying on the down and on the shore, and the mead and the ale was flowing in the camp of the Saxons. Yet was there one among the victors that found no rest for his wearied spirit in the excitement of the banquet; the frantic festivities of his fierce countrymen seemed not to him a fit mode of thanksgiving, for deliverance from a ruthless heathen foe; and in the calm silence of the night, he sought to be alone with his God, to offer praise to Him for that day's success. The eagle plume in his bonnet declared him of the royal race of Cerdic, and though his person was small, almost diminutive, yet his noble gait and princely bearing seemed to say he was no degenerate son of that illustrious family;—it was Athelstan, the Prince of Kent. Alone he stood upon the battle-field, and would have prayed, but for the strange tumult of

disordered thoughts that pressed upon his spirit ; there lay the dead and the dying ; and the dull moan of agony, and the sharp cry of the parting soul, mixed harshly with the howl of the gathering wolves, and the shrill scream of the eagle and the sea fowl. It seemed to his fevered imagination, as if the spirits of hell were flocking there for their prey ; for the warriors that lay there were heathen Danes, Odin's sworn slaves, and bound with a deadly curse to blot out the name of Christian in Saxon England. Yet was there calm above, in the bright Heaven ; and the stars that shone so silently, and the peaceful sea, told him that, though man was wild and evil, yet was creation still fair—still offered willing and obedient service to its Maker. The very drunken music of the war banquet became pure in the night air, and fell with softening cadence on his ear. The ripple washed upon the shore in measured intervals ; and he felt as he listened, that there are powers above, which man knows not of ; a will serenely working in this world of shadows which is not man's will, as the waves of time roll on, and break upon the shore of eternity.

Well had the young prince borne him that day in the battle ; where the strife had been the hottest, there had risen loudest the war-cry of Kent ; his hand had been red with slaughter, and he repented not of this, for he had done but his duty as a faithful servant of the Cross ; yet he felt it was an awful thing to disembody a living soul. He had that day won a great victory ; the storm-cloud that threatened to wrap his country in fire and desolation, was for a time dispersed ; yet he feared still, for he remembered the prophecy of Alcuin. England had had warning that, if she repented not, she should be delivered into the hands of

the Heathen ; and England had given no credence but went on still in wickedness.

Fifty years before had Lindisfarne felt the fury of the Danes, and from amidst the smoking ruins rose the prophet's voice :—

<sup>1</sup> “ Behold how the shrine of St. Cuthbert runs red with the blood of God's priests, and the most holy place in Britain is given over a prey into the hands of the heathen. What meaneth that shower of blood which I saw fall from the north, under a clear sky, on the altar of St. Peter's Church, at York, but that by the northern nations blood shall be shed in this land ?”

And to Ethelward, Archbishop of Canterbury, he had written further,—

“ Now, because of the scourge which has already fallen on parts of this island, in which our fathers have lived three hundred and forty years, I would have you know what Gildas, the wisest of the Britons says, that these same Britons, because the nobles were corrupt and avaricious, the bishops indolent, the people luxurious and profligate, had lost their country. Beware, therefore, how these same vices grow to a head among ourselves ; that God in His mercy may yet preserve to us in peace and comfort, that land which he has thought fit to give to us.”

<sup>2</sup> And the sun had been darkened, and awful signs and wonders had been seen in the heavens ; huge sheets of lightning rushing through the air, and whirlwinds, and fiery dragons flying across the heavens, and these tokens had been followed by a great famine ; yet for all this Athelstan knew that these warning voices

<sup>1</sup> Alcuin Opera. vol. i. Epist. 9, and 12.

<sup>2</sup> Saxon Chronicle.

had not been heard; that England had grown worse instead of better. The treacheries of Offa to St. Ethelbert were unavenged; the blood of the young St. Kenelm still cried to heaven. The Thanes of Wessex, who had restrained themselves under the strong hand of the despotic Egbert, under the feebler rule of his successor, had broken loose into every kind of lawless violence; for Ethelwulf had been dragged unwillingly from the cloister to the throne, and the serene quiet of a monastery had unfitted him for the control of a fierce and turbulent nobility. Abbeys and monasteries were everywhere falling into decay; scarce any but the poor and the ignorant were to be found among their inmates. An unnatural schism divided the Church, and the Saxons, and the British of Wales and Cornwall, lay mutually each under the curse of the other. The Church herself, leant for her support on the arm of the flesh; and bishop Aelstan, of Shirborne, was Athelstan's colleague in command that very day. But Athelstan had been trained in the way he should go, by the venerable St. Swithun, his father, king Ethelwulf's, dearest friend; and under his tutelage, had learnt where to look for help in the day of trouble. He would not trust in his bow; it was not his sword that could help him, but God's right hand, and His arm and the might of His countenance. Therefore, when God was wroth with His people, and had sworn that unless they repented He would cut them off, and they had not repented, He had sworn, and would He not perform? Without His favour, the armies of the Saxons would be scattered like dust before the wind. There was yet time; the last day of trial was not yet past; they had that day won a great battle; but penitence, and prayer, and humiliation,

could alone avail to obtain that without which all else was useless, and in the moment of victory, he felt its uselessness. He remembered the lessons of his teacher, that the truest warrior was he who warred with evil, by prayer and fasting, in its immediate home, in the heart of man ; and therefore, from his childhood, prince Athelstan had longed to make his home in the seclusion of the cloister. But he was then an only son ; and as his father in like case had obeyed when so obliged, so he, for his country's sake, had done what he conceived his duty, and had grown up a warrior. But since that time, king Ethelwulf had taken another wife, and four goodly sons were born to him, and so was the bar which existed between him and the hope of his youth, taken away ; and early cravings and high aspirations now in this solemn hour came streaming back upon his soul ; he remembered where his royal ancestor, king Ina, when tired of the vanity of a throne, had found peace at last ; and how in the holy seclusion, king Offa, had tried to wash away with tears the foul remembrance of his crime. Might not he too do better for his country thus, as well as for himself ? She had no lack of warriors, but few and scanty indeed were her Saints ; and never did devout lips at Easter Festival, crave more eagerly for the holy wafer, than did now prince Athelstan for the angelic food of fast and penance in the monastic cell ; and he kneeled down there upon the battle-field, and prayed for guidance. Now, whether it was that a deep sleep fell upon him, or a bodily form there presented itself to his waking senses, but an angel from heaven appeared to him, and bade him be of good heart, and go and do as he desired. He had chosen the good part and God was with him.



## SECTION II.

## GLASTONBURY ABBEY.

HERE therefore may properly be said to commence the life of St. Neot. The princely warrior, who had well and boldly fought the good fight with the worldly and carnal servants of the Evil One, was now thought worthy of the more honourable yet more dangerous post, to fight him in spirit in his own dominions ; and as he put off the world, so put he off with it, all to the last link that bound him to it ; father and brothers, and rank and wealth and kingdom, he forsook all, even his name. Prince Athelstan became the monk Neotus ; the very meaning of his new title “ the renewed,” implies, that his past life was to be as though it had not been ; or as the life of another man. In such change is entire revolution of heart and hope and feeling. It is indeed a death ; a resurrection, a change from earth on earth to heaven on earth ; before he did his duty to God in and through his duty to the world ; now what he does for the world is but indirect, but he is permitted a closer union, a more direct service to God. And therefore those good men who gave their labours to commemorate the life of this holy Saint, do properly commence their task at this point ; and that we too who are permitted to follow in their footsteps, may labour in the same reverential spirit as they laboured ; let us join with Abbot Ramsay of Croyland, and say,—

“ Forasmuch as it has pleased Almighty God to remove that holy Saint, Neotus, to the blessed company of Saints in heaven, I have undertaken to record such actions as he performed while here on earth ; therefore

with a deep sense of my own unworthiness for so high a task, I pray to the Fountain of all mercies, that of His infinite goodness He will deign to send me His most gracious help, that I may be enabled to make known such things as are handed down by tradition, concerning this venerable man; and that I may have him for my protector and intercessor in all dangers."

The Abbey to which he retired was Glastonbury, then under the charge of Abbot Edmund. From what we hear of St. Neot's life there, this Abbey must have formed some exception in point of order and discipline, to the general character of the monasteries of the age; and perhaps this reason may have influenced him in his election. But Glastonbury had long been a favourite of the race of Cerdic; Kentwin calls her the "Mother of the Saints," and a charter of immunity and privilege, granted her by Ina, still exists. Most venerable of the Abbeys of England, tradition assigned her for a founder, St. Joseph of Arimathea; and Holy Patrick spent the last years of his eventful life within her walls. King Ina thought God's blessing was with princes, who used their power for the protection of His Church. In deep faith, and generous spirit, heaped he his favour on this holy place; only entreating that there should be offered daily prayer and supplication for the remission of his sins, and the prosperity and future welfare of his kingdom; and because he felt a time might come, when bold bad men should hold the power of the land, and the spoiler might seek to lay his impious hands on God's inheritance; he solemnly guarded his bequests by a fearful imprecation of God's vengeance on any who should dare interfere with them. Vain precaution! Nine centuries passed away, and there sat a king on the throne of England, who hanged the last Abbot,

because he lifted up his voice against sacrilege, and refused to surrender the solemn trust which God had given him. Alas for Glastonbury now ! her choirs are silent ; the virgin of England lies in the dust ; her holy places are desolate ; her altars are defiled ; and ivy hangs on the old walls ; the pale stars glimmer through the broken arches on the tombs of the departed Saints ; and the owl and the night-crow keep their long watches in the deserted aisles, where for fifteen hundred years by night and day there went up ceaseless prayers to heaven for the prosperity of England.

King Ina believed in the power of prayer, and did what he did ; and prayer did Neot think surer safeguard than sword or shield ; therefore in his zeal and earnestness to serve in this way, he strove to purify himself, that so he might be heard. Accordingly with the great St. Anthony for his model,

“ From the day of his entrance he began sedulously to attach himself to the most holy of those by whom he was surrounded, and endeavoured to emulate their several excellencies. Now in the flower of his youth he climbed as it were step by step, the heights of sanctity ; and gave himself up to do the work of heaven, in the society of such men as he deemed the most devoted servants of God. Like the bees who are wont to blend together the savours of many kinds of flowers, lest the taste be cloyed by a too uniformly simple sweetness ; so did this holy man exhaust and appropriate to himself the particular graces of each several individual, and endeavour after every virtue of self-government ; arming himself thus at all points against the enemy of mankind, lest by one slip or fall he might give him an opportunity of reducing him entirely to his service.

So therefore he imitated one man in his continence, a second in affability and good temper, a third in severity, a fourth in meekness and loving-kindness, a fifth in passing sleepless nights in psalmody. Whoever was most diligent in the study of holy scripture, in fasting and prayer, in humility and mortification, sitting in sackcloth and ashes ; in patient endurance or compassionate forbearance, these he chose as his examples ; and thus possessing in his own person all these vicarious graces, yet was he humble to every one, affable in conversation, considerate and kind in transacting business, calm and dignified in appearance, grave in gesture, sincere and upright, and from his cradle pure and spotless."

His personal property, reserving only what was entirely necessary for his support, he distributed among the poor, and in supplying his necessities, even to his abstemious biographer, his abstemiousness was remarkable. Delicate meat was not for him ; even his coarse black bread he sometimes denied himself that he might have the more for the poor.

"Bidding his stomach fast long and late, he administered to his soul the daintiest morsels of heavenly food."

He thought not of his royal origin ; he regretted not the pomp and luxury of his youth ; in the dead of the night he left his hard pallet, to offer praise and thanksgiving, and that none might know of these extraordinary devotions, he would change his clothes, and disguised as the meanest of the secular penitents, would watch till daybreak in the Church, and then steal away to his cell and resume his ordinary habit.

Only one relaxation he permitted himself in the severity of his discipline ; and that was the society of

a dear friend ; Athelwold, afterwards Bishop of Winchester, spent his youth in the monastery of Glastonbury, and was the chosen associate of the royal Saint. Among the many beautiful fragments of thought, which yet shine out and smile upon us from out of those dark times, not the least interesting is part of a conversation between these two holy men. The question had turned upon the position of man in the world,—what was his business here ; and Neot illustrated his opinion from our Lord's history.

“ In the characters of Mary and Martha, may be seen the two kinds of Christian life ; each a lawful and each in its way a happy one ; the life of active labour in the world, the contemplative life of retirement from it. Martha is the first. She ministers to our Lord's necessities, and her conduct is not displeasing ; but Mary is thought deserving the higher praise, who knows no place but the feet of Jesus, who knows no business but to listen to his words. Let it be ours to choose like Mary the one thing needful ; let us not be like Martha troubled about many things. Do I then recommend idleness ? Nay, for life is short, and labour is profitable, and idleness is destructive to the soul. *The choice is in the kind of work.* Our work is the spiritual work, to subdue the flesh and live after the Spirit, to do the things of the Spirit. Ours is the good part to seek only the way of eternal life, and pursue it to the end, that so hereafter we may be found in the number of those who have been obedient to their Lord.”

So taught Neot, and so he lived. From following the example of others, he became himself an example to all others, in fasting and prayer, in watchings often, in giving of alms, in the care of the poor, in the study

of holy scripture, and in all manner of holy conversation. Such unusual sanctity in so young a man soon attracted general notice. His name spread far, and the Bishop sent for him, and held long conversations with him. On this occasion he was permitted to enter on his Diaconate ; and received on his return to the monastery, the office of Sacristan. There is but one thing told of his conduct while holding this position, — his reverential care of the holy vessels ; and this may seem at first but a small matter, scarcely worth recording, until we remember what these vessels are, and what their use. Perhaps the words of an English poet on this subject may lead us to a right appreciation of it.<sup>3</sup>

“ Never was gold or silver graced thus  
Before.

To bring this body and this blood to us  
Is more

Than to crown kings  
Or be made rings,  
For star-like diamonds to glitter in.

\* \* \* \*

When the great King offers to come to me  
As food,

Shall I suppose his carriages can be  
Too good ?

No ! stars to gold  
Turned never could  
Be rich enough to be employed so.

If I might wish then, I would have this bread,  
This wine,

Vesseled in what the sun might blush to shed  
His shine

When he should see—  
But till that be  
I'll rest contented with it as it is.

<sup>3</sup> Hervey, the Synagogue.

Thus steadily trod Neot on the path of sanctity. He used no adventitious means to rise to rank and place; he in the abbey walls was but as the meanest of the people; earthly crown was his by birthright; glory and honour he had won by talent and daring; but he knew that to that heavenly crown for which he struggled, and the favour of God for which he thirsted, there led but one way—the way of holiness.

So highly honourable was St. Neot's conduct, that long before the ordinary period of his Diaconate expired, he was recommended for the office of Priest. Unwillingly he accepted this new honour. So deeply unworthy he felt himself, that it was almost by force that he was at last induced to submit. "Surrounded by Laity as well as Clergy, and rather dragged than going of his own free will, he at length received his ordination."

"Dissatisfied with his past conduct now as inadequate for his new calling, all that he had done before he accounted as nothing. He redoubled his acts of piety, and from holy became more holy. His firmness became more enduring; his abstinence longer; his humility deeper; his garments of greater coarseness."

Now too he began to go about among the people instructing and preaching to them.

"Like a never-failing fountain, he gave the thirsty to drink large draughts of the word of God: by his prayers he drove the evil spirits from such as were possessed, and healed such as were diseased in body and in soul." "The people flocked to him for comfort and advice, and none who sought him ever returned empty. With all he had learned to sympathize. Rejoicing with those that rejoiced, and weeping with those that wept, he became all things to all men, that he might win all to Christ."

And as time went on, God left him not without special mark of His favour, and not only thus enabled him to scatter His benefits among the people ; but that all men might know that such a life as his did indeed raise its possessor above the weaknesses and imperfections of this mortal life, He began to work sensible miracles by his hand.

It was the custom of the monks of the Abbey, at the hour of mid-day, to retire alone to their several cells, for private prayer and meditation. This hour was held sacred, and no communication of any sort was permitted among the brethren. Neot, whose cell was nearest to the great gate of the monastery, was disturbed in his devotions by a violent and continued knocking. On repairing to the grating to ascertain the cause, he discovered a person who might not be refused, pressing in haste for admission ; he immediately hurried to the door, but to his confusion and perplexity, he found that from the smallness of his stature he was unable to reach the lock. The knocking now became more violent, and Neot, in despair of natural means of success, prayed to God for assistance. Immediately the lock slid gently down the door, until it reached the level of his girdle, and thus he was enabled to open it without further difficulty. This remarkable miracle is said to have been witnessed to by all the brethren, for the lock continued in its place, and the people flocked together from all quarters to see it.



## SECTION III.

## NEOT THE HERMIT.

HOLY are the characters of those whom God chooses to do His work on earth. The powers of nature forgot their wonted courses, and submitted to the will of St. Neot, but long and arduous penance was yet before him, ere his spirit should be sanctified to do the work of an apostle. The hardy children of the race of the Cymry, from their rocky fastnesses in Wales and Cornwall, still beheld with hatred the proud Saxon in the halls of their own ancestors, and refused to recognize them as brethren, even in the common ties of Christian fellowship. Proudly they stood aloof from Christendom, and because the Saxon was in communion with Rome, they denounced as Antichrist its holy bishop;<sup>4</sup> arrogantly vaunting to themselves the proud title of the Apostolic Church of England. From the heights of Dartmoor to where the restless waves of the Atlantic wash the far point of Tol Peden Penwith the crusading armies of Egbert found easy passage through the deserted valleys, while in their inaccessible mountain fortresses, the British laughed to scorn such efforts to subdue them; entangled in the deep ravines, and where advance had been so easy, finding bridges broken, valleys closed up, and passes occupied by these hardy mountain bands, retreat was now impossible; troop after troop of the invaders fell victims to the fury of the people, and a miserable remnant of Egbert's gallant army only

<sup>4</sup> Roger de Wendov. p. 91. Bede Hist. Eccl. lib. ii. Wm. Malmsbury. Also, Borlase. Hist. of the Antiquities of Cornwall.

escaped to tell the fate of the last attempt that was ever made by force of arms on the Cymry of the west.<sup>5</sup>

When the sword had failed, the Church was to be successful, and this unnatural feud was now to end. A humble monk was the chosen instrument of providence to effect this great purpose ; and an angel was sent to St. Neot, at Glastonbury, to bid him prepare himself for a long journey, into an unknown and barbarous land. With unflinching trust, this servant of the Lord obeyed His call. He made no difficulty ; he sought no time for enquiry ; with but one companion, the faithful Barius, having taken affectionate leave of his dear friends, in his much loved monastery, he set out on foot, in the direction the angel bade him. For many days they walked on, over hill and dale, over moor and down, and still the Spirit that moved the Saint, had given no token that he had reached the appointed spot, still urged him forward unremittingly. And they had crossed the rich vales of Somersetshire, and from the high ridge of Dartmoor, they gazed wistfully, for the last time, on the spot they loved so dearly ; yet they passed on, and now they had penetrated far into the wilderness of Cornwall. Along the wild and desolate range of moorland which divides the country, they were wearily dragging themselves along, the third week after their departure from Glastonbury—avoiding the town of Liskeard, where there lived a fierce chief, who feared not God, and was a deadly enemy of the Saxons ; they were traversing the southern edge of the moor

<sup>5</sup> Malmsbury and Wendover say, that Egbert conquered Cornwall as well as Wales. It is clear that there was a desperate slaughter, and that Egbert found it impossible to maintain his ground.

when, at an abrupt turn of a hill, they found themselves on the edge of a deep and narrow gorge, which carries the water of a small river, from a neighbouring morass to the sea. Broken into a succession of small waterfalls, the stream rushed swiftly down the abrupt side of a beautiful valley, and far below them wound gracefully along the green strip of meadow land in the bottom, while the luxuriant foliage of the dense masses of wood which clothed its sides, showed in grateful contrast to the long dreary tract over which they had passed. On descending the side of the hill, they came to a place where a rudely constructed basin received the pure water of a fountain, which there first bubbled into light, and, by virtue of a blessing from the good St. Gueryr, possessed a healing influence for all who sought its aid in faith and confidence; a small chapel adjoining it, and sanctified by the presence of the relics of the same saint, invited them to pause for their devotion, and within its sacred walls, the same angel who bade him go forth from Glastonbury, now brought St. Neot the welcome news that this was his journey's end. Here, in this lonely spot, he was to spend seven years in a hermit's cell, and live by the labour of his own hands; yet was he not unsupported by Him who had sent him there. From the time of his arrival, to the close of his trial, a continuous sensible miracle declared the abiding presence of the favour of God. They had spent one night there, and the Saint was in the chapel, when Barius came in haste to tell him that three fish were playing in the basin where the fountain rose. St. Neot ordered him on no account to touch them, until he should have himself enquired what this strange thing might mean. In answer to his prayer, the same angel appeared, and told him that the fish were there

for his use, and that every morning one might be taken and prepared for food; if he faithfully obeyed this command, the supply should never fail, and the same number should even continue in the fountain. And so it was, and ever the three fish were seen to play there, and every morning one was taken and two were left, and every evening were three fish leaping and gamboling in the bubbling stream; therefore did the Saint offer nightly praise and thanksgiving, for this so wonderful preservation; and time went on, and ever more and more did St. Neot's holiness grow and expand and blossom. The fruit was yet to come.

"Here he exerted the strength he had acquired before; and exhibited in his own person the truth of those things which he had learnt in Holy Scripture. The thorns of riches choked him not; the burdens of this world retarded him not. Forgetting those things which were behind, and reaching forward to those which were before, he ever pressed forward to obtain the prize of his high calling in Christ Jesus."

His discipline was so strict, and continued with such unrelaxing severity, that on a certain occasion he was taken ill in consequence. The faithful Barius, ever anxious to anticipate his master's smallest want, if by any means some portion of the saintly radiance might so be reflected upon him, was anxious to prepare some food, to be ready for him on his awakening from a sleep into which, after nights of watchfulness, he had at length fallen. Here, however, he was met by a difficulty; his master's illness had reduced him to a state of extreme delicacy, and he was at a loss how he ought to dress his food. Hastily and incautiously he resorted to a dangerous expedient. Instead of one fish, he took two from the basin, and roasting one and boiling the

other, he presented both to St. Neot for choice, on his awaking from his sleep. In dismay and terror the Saint learnt what had been done, and springing from his couch, and ordering Barius instantly to replace both fish as they were in the water, himself spent a night and a day in prayer and humiliation. Then at length were brought the welcome tidings of forgiveness ; and Barius joyfully reported that both fish were swimming in the water. After this, his illness left him, and the supply in the fountain continued as before.

In the monastery of Glastonbury he had learnt the mode of self-discipline by which St. Patrick had attained his saintly eminence, and now in his hermitage he almost rivalled him in austerities. Every morning St. Patrick repeated the Psalter through from end to end, with the hymns and canticles, and two hundred prayers. Every day he celebrated mass, and every hour he drew the holy sign across his breast one hundred times ; in the first watch of the night he sung a hundred psalms, and knelt two hundred times upon the ground ; and at cockcrow he stood in water, until he had said his prayers. Similarly each morning went St. Neot's orisons to heaven from out of his holy well ; alike in summer and in the deep winter's cold, bare to his waist, he too each day repeated the Psalter through.

One day when he was thus engaged in the depth of winter, he was disturbed by suddenly hearing the noise of a hunting party riding rapidly down the glen. Unwilling that any earthly being should know of his austerities, but only the One who is over all, he sprung hastily from the water and was retiring to his home, when he dropped one of his shoes. He did not wait to pick it up, but hurried off and completed his devotions in secret.

“ And when he had finished his psalms, and his reading, and his prayers, with all diligence and care, he remembered his shoe, and sent his servant to fetch it. In the meantime a fox, wandering over hill and vale, and curiously prying into every nook and corner, had chanced to come to the place where the holy man had been standing, and had lighted upon the shoe and thought to carry it off. And an angel, who loved to hover in hallowed places, and to breathe an atmosphere which was sanctified by the devotions of God’s Saints, was present there invisibly and saw this thing, and he would not that such an one as St. Neot should be molested even in so small a matter, so that he had sent the sleep of death upon the fox, and Barius when he came there found him dead, arrested at the instant of his theft, yet holding the thongs of the shoe in his mouth. Then he approached in fear and wonder, and took the shoe and brought it to the holy man, and told him all that happened.”

And as such holy life receives such manifest tokens of the Divine favour and protection, and extraordinary powers display themselves, as the spirit becomes emancipated from its thralldom to the flesh, so was it permitted to exercise its ordinary influence in winning others by its natural dignity and attractiveness. Few persons ever visited St. Neot’s valley except on hunting parties, and another adventure from one of these befell him, as he was engaged as before at his fountain. He was standing by the water when a young and beautiful fawn bounded from the adjoining thicket and panting from weariness and terror sought a refuge at his feet. Hitherto the poor creature had known man but as its foe, but the serene countenance of the holy man had no terror for the innocent and oppressed, and crouching

closely to him with upturned imploring eyes, it appeared to beseech his protection. Not so the fierce and hungry bloodhounds that followed hot behind. Nature has nothing more terrible to savageness and cruelty than the gentle majesty of virtue; and the frightened animals shrunk back cowed and overawed into the wood. Up came the wild hunter and hallooed them to the prey, but his hot spirit too was quenched in the pure influences which flowed from the countenance of the Saint; he felt the warning, the mild rebuke cut him to the heart, and in the first enthusiasm of repentance, he hung up his horn as an offering at the shrine of St. Petrox, and himself assumed the habit of a monk and retired to the same monastery.

And angels sought fellowship with this blessed man, and as the long period of his hermit life passed on, not seldom was he favoured with their high and awful conversation. One more illustrious hunter visited the shrine, and that was his young brother Prince Alfred. In the boyish excitement of the chace he had penetrated into these remote wildernesses beyond the boundaries of his father's dominion; but he left his sport, and sought his saintly brother for advice and counsel. In early childhood, this noble-hearted boy had learnt to realize the hard lesson that "God scourgeth every son whom he receiveth," and, when oppressed by the infirmity of the flesh, had solemnly prayed that God would be pleased to send upon him some disorder, which might the better enable him to subdue it; and God had heard his prayer, and had sent the fever on him, and afflicted him with very grievous sickness; so grievous indeed, and so severe, that he could no longer bear it, and now, in St. Gueryr's shrine, with his brother's intercession, he prayed that the waters of the

well might exert their healing influence in his favour, and that some other disorder in the room of this might be sent on him, which he might be the better able to endure ; and this prayer too was heard. And Alfred went back on his way, and became king of England, and Neot went strictly and holily on in his, and for seven years never for one day relaxed the severity of his discipline ; remembering the solemn words of his great Master, “ Whoso taketh not his cross and beareth it after me, is not worthy of me.” Each did his work on earth ; and if any should ask what earthly work St. Neot had hitherto done for England, in her many trials and dangers, we answer, that though we see not the under current of Providence, and know not *in what way* the mysterious influence of Saints avail, yet we do know that they are the salt of the earth : we do know that ten righteous men would have saved the cities of the plain, and that while just Lot continued within their cursed walls, God himself declared that He could do nothing.

However this be, as we have seen St. Neot hitherto in one form, we are now to see him in another. Hitherto, though his lamp shone brightly, it shone not to the world. In the earth, but not of the earth, the mysteries of the spirit had been in part unfolded to him ; nature had reversed her laws for him ; angels had been his companions ; and in their serene company, the chains of his earthly prison-house had burst asunder and fallen off from him ; at length he was free. How glorious a state for a frail child of Adam here on earth ; yet was there a more glorious behind. For it is more glorious for one who has tasted the heavenly vision, and has had his dwelling in the mysterious Presence ; his body on earth, his spirit beyond the



stars to remember his brethren in captivity walking among vain shadows in their prison cave, and disquieting themselves in vain, to forget his more immediate and proper good, to disrobe himself and come down among them, to sway and guide their feeble trembling efforts in the right way. For it is written, that this perplexing life riddle shall never find solution until the Saints possess and rule the earth. Thus came Neot back among mankind; and that nothing should be done disorderly, although he had received his Apostolic commission from God himself, yet must it be confirmed by the visible head of the Church on earth, and he went to Rome to receive the benediction of Pope Leo. Nearly two hundred years before a college had been founded there, by the piety of the royal Ina, for the instruction of the Anglo-Saxon students in theology. To this place St. Neot proceeded, and spent many months among them. The fame of the princely anchorite had preceded him, and he was welcomed with the warmest enthusiasm. The holy father gave his fullest sanction to his purpose, and at length dismissed him with his benediction, and the charge to preach the word of God among the people. And now commencing his labours, he did not return home immediately, but made a missionary circuit, teaching among the unconverted tribes of Prussia and northern Germany. The same powers which had been granted to the earliest apostles were continued to him, and wherever he went he was enabled to work miracles, in attestation of the truth of his mission. "For," says his biographer, "if Christ be the head of the elect, and the faithful are members of Him, according to the word of the apostle, 'We being many are one body in Christ,' what wonder if such members as adhere to Him as their head, should

receive peculiar virtues from that head. St. Neot abides in Christ, and Christ in him; since he has made him thus to sparkle with miracles, in this fleeting world of shadows."

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## SECTION IV.

## THE MONASTERY.

AT the end of the year, the Saint returned to Neotstowe, not to resume his seclusion, but at length to work the work which God had appointed for him, peacefully to accomplish, by gentle means, what the sword of Egbert had attempted so unsuccessfully, to bring back the schismatic church of Cornwall into the bosom of her mother, and through her to reduce the country itself to peaceful submission to the princes of West Saxony. As a first step to accomplish this purpose, he designed erecting a monastery on the site of his old hermitage, from whence, as from a great reservoir, would be poured out streams of missionaries among the people. His journey to Rome, its known object, and the events which had ensued upon it, added to his previous reputation, gave such publicity to his undertaking, that no sooner was it known to have commenced, than a very remarkable success at once attended it. "Many of the wealthiest nobles forsook the world, and chose with him a life of voluntary hardship and poverty. Many brought their children to him, entreating earnestly that these at least might find a refuge in his flock from the storms and troubles of this wretched world, and be nourished up for the life

eternal." The charity of the neighbouring people provided them with lands, which were kept in cultivation by the lay brothers, for the support of the monastery, and to supply the wants of the neighbouring poor. And here, under the eye of the holy Saint, were bred up those faithful children of the Church Catholic who spread her truth with such success, that we hear no more of Cornish schism; and but a few years after, the whole West peacefully submitted themselves to the rule of a bishop sent by Saxon Edward. In spite, however, of this success abroad, and indeed his general popularity, St. Neot had difficulties of a private nature to contend with, which gave yet further occasion for the interference of Providence for his protection. The fierce prince of Liskeard beheld with no small displeasure the rapid growth of a religious, and above all a Saxon rival, in his immediate neighbourhood. His Briton blood boiled with indignation, to see his enemy thus eating away the very root and core of his own authority, and attracting so unaccountably the hearts and affections of his subjects. From his ignorance of the secret of St. Neot's influence, he was at a loss which way to oppose him. Open personal violence he could not venture upon; so that he had recourse instead, to a system of galling and tyrannical oppression of the inferior brethren of the House of Neotstowe. He maintained that he had a right to the secular service of all his subjects, and would forcibly compel them to leave their own work, and labour for him. They cultivated his soil, attended his cattle, and, like slaves, were made to engage in the most menial service. Now as many of these brethren were members of the noblest British families, chiefs, and the sons of chiefs, and, like himself, descendants of Cadwallon, it may be sup-

posed such treatment was no little trial of their Christian fortitude ; and indeed it was intended to alienate their affections from their new master who was unable or unwilling to protect them. So matters went on till one harvest time, when, as usual, they were forced into the prince's fields to carry his corn for him. It was a very large harvest : they had loaded many wagons, and were driving them home. The road lay along a narrow ridge, with a precipice on one side sheer down into the river. Exactly as they reached this point, a violent squall springing up from the north-west suddenly catching the carts, overthrew them with all their load at once into the river, where they were totally destroyed. Such an event could not fail of its effect. The prince regarded it as a judgment ; and as an intimation that if he persisted in his tyranny, worse might befall him. He withdrew his opposition, and from that day forward never interfered again with the dependants of St. Neot. On another occasion the cupidity of a band of robbers was attracted by the lonely unprotected situation of the monastery, and they carried off the cattle which were used for the plough. The servants went out as usual to work in the morning, but came back in dismay to their master, and told him they could find no oxen ; the door of the stable was open, and they were gone. He told them not to be downhearted, but to return to the field, and wait the issue. They obeyed disconsolately ; their plough was now useless to them, and they were counting the weary hours they must spend in digging over that rough field, when on lifting up their eyes, they saw four beautiful stags standing by it, and gracefully bending their heads over the yoke. Hardly venturing to approach, they gazed in mute astonishment, but the creatures' quiet

gentle manner showed so plainly they were waiting for the yoke to be laid upon their necks, that at last they ventured to go up and harness them; without sign of fear or resistance, they submitted with the most willing gracefulness, and all that day and all the next, they toiled at their unwonted labour. Far and wide spread this strange story, and among those that heard of it, were the very thieves who had been the occasion of the miracle. Frantic with terror, not knowing what might be in store for them, when such means were taken to repair the mischief they had done, they hurried humbly to the feet of St. Neot, to confess their sin and restore his property. And he received them and forgave them, and they in their zeal and sorrow besought him that he would yet take further pity on them; they feared to return to the world, lest their old habits returned upon them, and the devil regain the mastery over their souls; they would stay where they were, under the shadow of the Saint, and become the servants of him whom they had injured: and so it was; and these violent and lawless men became numbered among the faithful and the obedient, and in time were raised to office in the sacred ministry. "Such," exclaims his biographer, with a glow of enthusiasm, "was the wonderful power of this holy Saint. He saved the oxen from the thieves, the stags from their savage nature, and the thieves themselves from the power of the devil." And the stags went back to their wood and became free again, but they never forgot their lesson of humility, and carried to their deaths upon their bodies the marks of what had befallen them; and long years after were seen young fawns, sporting in the forests of Liskeard, with the white ring where the yoke had pressed their ancestors, yet visible on their necks.

## SECTION V.

## ALFRED AND NEOT.

TEN years before parted the two royal brethren, Alfred and St. Neot. They were now to meet again ; and one, alas, how changed ! Then we saw prince Alfred in the glow of young enthusiasm, arming himself for the fight, and setting out right nobly on the christian warrior's course, high in hope and rich in friends, and in the favour of God and man ; now he comes back, a proud, self-willed, overbearing monarch, his subjects discontented at home, a fierce foe pressing on him from without, seeking counsel of his long-neglected brother. His father was dead, his three brothers all dead, and these two stood alone, the sole surviving descendants of the illustrious Cerdic. And one was speedily to be gathered to his fathers, and on the other was the wrath of God to be poured out, and he was to be purified in the furnace of adversity. Long years after, he related to his friend and confessor, bishop Asser, the stories of his youth ; and he, as a warning for those in time to come, recorded the history of the sin and of its punishment.

“ Not victory only over his enemies, and success in difficulty, did God think fit to send on him, but He permitted him often to be worn down by his enemies, afflicted with adversities, depressed by the contempt of his own subjects, that he might know that there is one Lord of all, to whom every knee must bow, in whose hand are the hearts of kings, who putteth down the mighty from their seat, and exalteth the humble ; who

willeth sometimes that his faithful servants, while prosperous, shall be struck with the scourge of adversity ; that in depression they may not despair of the mercy of God, and when exalted to honour they may not be puffed up, but may know to whom is due all that they possess. This adversity indeed which befell the king, came not on him undeservedly ; because in the beginning of his reign, when he was yet young and inexperienced, such men of his kingdom as came to him requiring assistance in their difficulties, and such as were oppressed by those in authority and demanded justice at his hands, he refused to listen to, or render them any assistance, but took no account of them at all. For this did that most blessed Saint Neotus, his nearest kinsman, while yet alive in the flesh, grieve from the bottom of his heart, and his prophetic spirit foretold what must befall him for his misconduct. Nevertheless, he regarded not the reproof of the man of God, and refused to receive his words. Because, therefore, whatever sins man doth commit must of necessity be punished either in this world or in the world to come, the true and holy Judge would not that this folly of the king should go unpunished in this present life, to the end, that he might spare him in the strict account hereafter."

How sad is the meeting between two brothers, or men who for any other reason have been very dear to each other, when one has gone astray ! Sin has thrown a broad gulf between their hearts, over which there is no other bridge but penitence. Till then there can be no more sympathy, no more confidence—remembering what he once was, the presence of the friend of purer days adds poignancy to the remorse of the guilty one. His proud spirit chafes at the degradation he cannot

chuse but feel. He seeks refuge from himself in an assumption of reserve and haughtiness, and anger at the reproaches he imagines he sees in every word and glance, closes the avenues to better feelings. And the other,—grief is all the feeling he can have. His affections yearn for the lost one, but they may not reproach him except through God by prayer. While his heart is bursting, his stern sense of duty forces him to master it. Cold grave rebuke, advice, instruction, is all he may give, but all more sternly far than if they had never been to each other what they were. He may not trust himself to be gentle.

So met Alfred and St. Neot, not as brothers, not in the confiding affectionateness of mutual love; but as Saul came to Samuel, an unrepenting king to a saint and prophet; to ask a blessing, to receive a rebuke. First instruction and counsel were tried. "The Saint entertained him honourably, for as much as he was his prince; but because he governed not his people aright, because he was haughty and forbidding in his manners, and his rule austere and harsh—for these things did the blessed Neot rebuke him and teach him what was the duty of a Christian king." And it appears that for a time at least his slumbering conscience was awakened, for "he went to his house in awe and great fear; and from that time forward came frequently to see the Saint, and seek from him advice and counsel."

Some men, when their hearts condemn them, seek to forget themselves; like Ahab who hated Micaiah because he prophesied evil concerning him, they fear God's presence and shrink from every thing which reminds them of Him. These men are cowards, but men of nobler natures, even while unrepentant and yet in their sins, still will not wholly renounce their alle-



giance. Though fallen, they dare look round them and see where they stand. They know their state, but they do not rest contented in it. Therefore they will not yet cast off the last rope of their moorings; and while they have not energy enough to restrain their passions, they seem still to seek the presence of those who they know will not spare their censures. So Saul clung to Samuel, so Joash to Elisha, so Nebuchadnezzar to Daniel. And so now though "he departed not yet from the evil of his doings," king Alfred came often to see his brother.

At length came the last earthly interview, and the prophecy of final vengeance.

"It came to pass on a day that the king went as he was wont to see the man of God; who, when he came to him, among many other things, rebuked him again for his misconduct. He set before him the pains of eternal fire, and showed how those who are mighty upon earth shall hereafter be mightily tormented. And besides this, in the spirit of prophecy, he foretold to him all which should befall him afterwards. 'Thou seest, O king, what now thou sufferest from thine enemies, and thou shalt suffer more hereafter; for in thy kingdom thou art proud and tyrannical, whereas before the eyes of the Divine Majesty thou oughtest rather with the king and prophet David to have shown thyself meek and humble. Therefore by a foreign nation that knoweth not Christ, thou shalt be driven thence. Alone thou shalt escape from thine enemies, and shalt lie concealed under the hands of God, and so for thy sins thou shalt remain many days. Nevertheless I have obtained for thee by my prayers, that if thou wilt turn from thine iniquities, God will yet have mercy on thee and restore thee to thy state and sceptre. Now there-

fore take thou more wholesome counsel for thyself and people, and send men to Rome with presents for our most reverend Father there, and entreat him that he will of his clemency be pleased to remit the tax upon the English School. And behold I go the way of all flesh ; our Lord Jesus Christ has revealed to me that I am soon to depart hence. Now therefore when Divine Providence shall have fulfilled its purpose concerning thee, and shall have rightly punished thee for thy misdeeds, then be thou of good heart, and put thy trust in Him who ruleth all things, and pray for his assistance ; and the Almighty God, by me his servant, shall hear thy prayers and restore thee again to thy place.' ”

And now the day was spent, the evening was come. He had finished his course, he had wrought his work, and St. Neot was to die. He lived not to see the final success of his mission, but the word was gone out, the seed was sown, and in its good time the fruit came to perfection. Such is ever the lot of God's workmen. They sow and others reap, they lay the foundation, others build the superstructure. A work which is to endure must be done in faith, and the workman receives his reward, but not on earth. The monastery of Neotstowe was but in its infancy when its founder died ; but to this day men pray and praise in the house which he provided them, and in his own saintly crown in heaven shines the bright jewel of the recovered Church of the West.

Soon after his last interview with king Alfred, St. Neot was attacked by fever. He had been told before that his course was ended, and he knew that this illness was the signal of his departure. But one thing remained for him, once more to receive the Holy Communion, and then straightway in the presence of the

assembled brethren, amidst the pealing of loud anthems and prayers ascending round him up to heaven, he surrendered his soul to God.

With solemn pomp and fear his body was committed to the earth. Gloriously, as when at evening light clouds flock together to gaze at the departing sun, and his last rays as they fall on them bathe them in unutterable splendour, were shed the last influences of this holy man on those who crowded to his funeral. For the houses where Saints have had their dwelling place are holy as they were holy. Those temples which so large a measure of God's Spirit has deigned to hallow by its presence, become impregnated by its blessed influence, and are not as those of other men. The spirit returns to Him who gave it, and the body to the dust; but it is ransomed from the power of corruption; though it dissolves it decays not. The natural body shrinks and shrivels up like decaying leaves. These holy tabernacles in decomposing shed round them fragrance, like the flowers of paradise.

Multitudes of persons from all quarters came together to take a last farewell of the person of their beloved St. Neot, and all who came within the power of the rich odour which exhaled from him as he lay there, became divinely refreshed in soul and body. Those who had diseases were healed every one; they needed not so much as to touch the body; they gazed upon it, and the evil spirit which tormented them fled away in terror and dismay. Those that he won at his death were more than those whom he won when he was living; and in a short time the number of persons who craved admittance to his monastery became so great that it was necessary to enlarge the Church. On this occasion the body was moved "with great care and trem-

bling; with long watchings, and fasting and prayer, it was taken from the place where it was first laid, and re-buried on the north side of the high altar, where it now lies. Again, when it was exposed the same rich fragrance issued from it and filled the Church, and again did those holy relics answer to the devout approaches of the diseased by an immediate cure. And for the merits of the same most holy Saint, the favour and blessing of Almighty God yet rested on that spot, and ceased not to be poured forth there in answer to the prayers of the faithful."

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## SECTION VI.

## THE DANES.

FROM the deep dungeons of Ella of Northumberland, where serpents were writhing round him and fastening their envenomed fangs into his flesh, rose the death chaunt of Ragnar Lodbrog. Far over the wide waves rolled the wild notes to the chamber of the Scald Aslauga, his sorceress consort. Swift sped she the spear messenger among the fierce vikings; and the nobles of Norway and of Denmark vowed a terrible revenge. Three kings and nine earls joined their forces to the sons of the murdered monarch, and the most mighty armament that had ever left the shores of the Baltic, now set sail for Northumberland. North and south, east and west England was to be laid desolate; the hated name of Christian was to be blotted out, and Odin's recreant slaves forced again to bend before the

God of their ancestors. Hinguar and Hubba for revenge, Guthrum, Healfden and Bagsar for booty and conquest, and all maddened with savage superstition, fell like a pack of howling wolves on the forces of Northumberland. The enchanted standard of the Raven, woven in one summer noon by Ragnar's daughters, floated in the van, and the foul bird, animated by some infernal spirit, snuffed the coming carnage and croaked and clapped its wings. The troops of the Saxons were scattered like chaff. The murderous tyrant Ella was flayed alive and flung a prey to the eagle and the kite. The prophecy of Alcuin was terribly fulfilled. The iniquity of the wretched Saxons was now full, and vengeance drew a bloody pen across the appalling amount.

And yet the most awful part of such national inflictions is, that not the guilty only perish, but the indiscriminating wave of calamity sweeps all alike before it, the innocent with the wicked. On the monasteries fell most heavily the Danish fury. They were reputed rich; they were defenceless; above all, in them lay the vital spirit of Christianity. Scarce one through all England escaped. It would be sickening to follow their course; the scenes are of too uniformly horrible a character. Yet some few instances of Christian heroism flash out and call for eternal honour. The nunnery of Coldingham lay in the path of the Danes, and full well knew Ebba, the abbess, that worse than death awaited her flock. What were they to do? Escape they could not; die by their own hands they might not. She called the sisterhood together. It was after vespers, and the Danes would be there the next morning. She said she knew of but one way; she would set them the example, they might follow if they would.

Their beauty was their worst enemy ; destroy that and they were safe. She drew a knife from under her robe, and herself severed her nose and lips. In silence all followed her terrible example. The savage spoiler came for his prey ; but when they looked for beauty, to satiate their foul lust, they found but hideous and ghastly figures, foul with blood. Back rushed the baffled fiends, in mingled fear and loathing, and in their disappointed fury, burnt that noble band of immaculates in the fires of their own abbey. Some gallant stands were made in Mercia and East Anglia. Priests and monks buckled on their armour, and went out to the battle to be slain. Burrhed, of Mercia, fled to Rome, and St. Edmund, of East Anglia, was barbarously murdered. The monks of Croyland, with Prior Toly, went out and fought desperately, but they were all destroyed, and the monastery, with all its occupants, reduced to a heap of ashes. Abbot Theodore fell like a Christian warrior ; he was slaughtered at his own altar, celebrating mass. Of all the kingdoms of the Octarchy, Wessex alone remained untouched. Had Alfred but continued firm and steadfast, as he had begun, who can tell but it might have yet been spared ? But even this great prince too, for a while forgot himself. St. Neot's warnings were despised, and now his threatenings were to be accomplished. For six years of his reign, the stroke was delayed by the long-suffering of God. At length it fell. By a long course of tyranny and injustice, and perhaps even worse crimes, (for these are hinted at) Alfred, once the darling of West Saxony, had alienated the affections of his people, and now he was only hated and despised. In the spring of the year 877, the armies of the Danes came down upon him : his subjects deserted him, and submitted every-

where to the invaders: he found himself, without striking a blow, a fugitive and an outcast. St. Neot's prophecy was fulfilled; he was driven for a time from the throne he had disgraced, and sunk to such abject misery, that at one time no one of his subjects knew where he was, or what had become of him.

In the marshes of Somersetshire, lay an island, formed by the alluvial deposit of the Thone and the Parret, of considerable extent; a deep morass divided it from the mainland, and its sides were covered with a low rough copsewood; the centre was open, and sufficiently large to find employment for a neatherd. No trace of it now remains. The soil has sunk; the floods wash over the whole, but to Alfred it furnished a retreat from the pursuit of the Danes. Entirely alone, he presented himself at the neatherd's cottage; he said he was an officer of the king's army, and requested the shelter of their roof, till better times enabled him to return to the world. Alfred's great error, as king, had been neglect of his poorer subjects. With a singular aptness of retribution, he was condemned to beg protection from one of the very poorest, and to receive it only on condition of his performing the most menial services for him. How hard a trial for one so little used to self-restraint! And yet he bore it uncomplainingly; and there was even worse in store for him. The neatherd's wife one day left him in charge of the cakes which were baking before the fire. Alfred's thoughts unfortunately wandered; his charge was neglected, the cakes were burnt. The old woman had a tongue, and was not sparing in the use of it; indeed, the legend says, she not only scolded, but struck the king; but he submitted with the most patient resignation; a sure proof that he was returning to himself

again. After this trial, the severest part of Alfred's punishment was remitted. He found means of communicating with a few of his friends ; his wife and children joined him, and a small body of his followers. Together, they erected a fortification in the island, and supported themselves by fishing, and pillaging from the Danes. Marked as he had been by heaven from the first, he was not now deserted in his affliction. One holy Saint, while yet in the body, had foretold his downfall ; another, now in spirit, came to give him hopes of restoration. "Men have entertained angels unawares." One day in the depth of winter, his men being all out fishing, he was sitting reading with his wife, when a beggar knocked at the door, and entreated charity for Christ's sake. Their stock of food was scanty ; one loaf was all ; but Alfred took it, and breaking it in two, with the words, "Blessed be God in all his gifts," he gave half of it to the poor man, adding that He who could feed five thousand men with five loaves and two fishes, would make that sufficient for his necessities. The beggar departed ; the king resumed his reading, and presently fell asleep. In a dream, the holy Cuthbert appeared to him ; he was the poor beggar ; he had been sent to try him whether he was indeed turned back from his evil ways. Nobly had Alfred borne the trial : he should not lose his reward ; his restoration was at hand, and as a token that the vision was indeed true, a multitude of fish should attend the successful efforts of his servants. The king awoke : his people returned, wondering that in spite of the cold and severe frost their success had been so great. And the spring of the year 878 drew on, and he had now been nearly a year in exile, and St. Neot, the messenger of wrath, came to confirm the glad tidings.



Watchful and sleepless, the king was lying in his bed, when, by permission of the merciful God, His servant St. Neot appeared to him.

“Knowest thou not,” he said, “how vain are the thoughts of man. They who hope in the Lord shall take courage, they shall make to themselves wings as eagles, they shall fly and shall not faint. Now, therefore, up and be doing; for thou shalt go forth to battle with these heathens, and the Lord shall be with thee, and they shall flee before thee. And king Guthrum and his nobles shall be humbled, and shall leave their idols and be baptized. And behold, I will go with thee, and with power from above I will lead thy forces to the battle, and they shall be victorious. The seventh week after Easter thou shalt go forth.”

In the meantime, the Danes had been doing their work most fearfully. Hinguar and Hubba, like two incarnate fiends, had penetrated to Devonshire, sparing neither sex nor age, pillaging, slaying, and burning all before them: here, however, they met their first check. St. Edmund's blood, which cried aloud to heaven, was here to be avenged. Ragnar's fierce sons had run their course. The scanty remnant of the faithful Saxons were gathered with Odun, earl of Devon, in the castle of Cynuit. The place was without water; and the camp of the Danes lay around it, secure of a bloodless victory. Providence, however, had ordered the issue otherwise. A fierce sally of the garrison, in the grey of a March morning, as desperate as it was unexpected, ended in the total rout of the Danish forces; Hinguar and Hubba were destroyed by the sword of Odun, and the disenchanted raven, now lifeless, and with drooping wings, fell into the hands of the conquerors. By this defeat, however, the Danish

power was not materially weakened. The whole authority was now centered in the person of Guthrum, who lay with the large division of the army on the Downs, in Wiltshire. Fresh hordes were continually arriving from the Baltic to recruit their losses, and except from the spirit the Saxons had acquired from the success in Devonshire, Alfred seemed no nearer his throne than he had been the year preceding: he had received a promise, however, and he believed. And now Easter was passed, and his adventurous spirit leading him to neglect no human means of success, in the disguise of a harper, he visited in person the Danish camp at Ethendun. He played and sung before Guthrum himself, and having made his observations, retired.

And then came Whitsuntide, "and the king rode forth to Brixton, to Egbert's rock on the eastern side of Selwood, and all Somersetshire, and all Wiltshire, and all the men of Hampshire, who had not fled beyond the sea, came forth to meet him, and when they saw him as it were come to life again, after so long eclipse, they were filled with unrestrainable rapture." For the tide had turned, the favour of God was coming back upon them, and those men whom we lately left desponding cowards, we welcome back the enthusiastic heroes prepared to do all or die. A refreshing change. Thus he found himself once more at the head of an army, and resolved at once to bring matters to an issue. Humanly speaking, success depended on the blow being struck swiftly and promptly, before the Danes were prepared to receive him, and he began his march immediately, in the second week in May, 878. The Danes were still at Ethendun, and he went directly toward them. About five miles west of the spot where

they lay, is the small village of Iley : here the Saxons halted, the night preceding the last battle ; and Alfred lay there in his tent, and again, as before, appeared the venerable figure of St. Neot.

“His form was like an angel of God ; his hair was white as snow ; his garments glistening, and fragrant of the odours of heaven ; he brought armour with him, and thus addressed the king :—‘ Rise up in haste, and prepare for victory ; when thou camest hither, I was with thee, I supported thee ; now, therefore, on the morrow go forth, thou and thy men of war, to the fight, and the Lord shall be with you, even the Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle, who giveth victory to kings. And behold, I go before you to the battle, and thy enemies shall fall by thy arm before mine eyes, and thou shalt smite them with the edge of the sword.’ ”

On the eastern slope of the high range of hills which rise from the valley of the Avon, lay the camp of the Danes ; so rapid, so energetic, had been Alfred’s movements, that he himself brought the tidings of his rising, and no hint of danger had reached them to disturb their quiet. There lay the vast army wrapped in negligent repose. The morning mist hung like a dull heavy curtain over the camp. The damp pennons drooped upon their staffs. The drowsy sentinels were slumbering at their posts. Not a watch-dog barked, not a note of alarm was given, while troop after troop of the Saxons defiled silently over the brow of the hill, and took their station on the summit of the slope. Foremost rode king Alfred ; his small army was now all disposed for the charge, and he briefly and impressively addressed them. “ Heavily,” he said, “ has the scourge of God fallen on us for our sins. Our homes

are desolate, our fields wasted, our holy places are destroyed, our priests are fled, and the hands of these heathen hounds run red with the blood of our dearest kinsmen. We have suffered, we have been forgiven. The day of retribution is come. We alone remain of all the armies of West Saxony ; but we are not alone, for God is with us. He has said, and will he not perform ? This day shall the heathen be delivered into your hands. On now, therefore, ye servants of the Most High ! For your God and for your country, for your hearth and for your homes, fall on and spare not !” A thousand voices rent the sky,—“The Lord shall give strength to His people. Blessed be God.” A thousand swords flashed back the red rays of the rising sun. The mist rolled off ; streamed out proudly the royal standard in the morning breeze, and down like a mountain torrent crashed the Saxons on their foe. At that first awful shout, each slumbering Dane had started into life in terrified surprise. At the first fierce rush they fled in panic and fell in heaps under the sword of the destroyer ; yet among their vast hosts Alfred’s army was but a small river to the broad ocean, and their scattered bands soon rallied with desperate fury. Hell sent her spirits to their aid, the Yotuns came flashing through the air, and Loki rode upon his dragon steed and fought for Guthrum, and backwards and forwards swayed the tide of the battle.

What awful figure is that which has seized king Alfred’s standard, and waves the Saxons on with majestic hand ? Aslauga’s demons knew the servant of the Mighty One, and fled back howling to their icy prisons. Terror struck their weapons from the hands of the Pagans ; they dared not look on him, but fled on every side. None saw him come ; none save Alfred knew

whence he was ; but there stood Neot, once more upon a field of battle in the same terrific majesty as the king before had seen him. High he waved the royal standard, marshalling the Saxons on to victory. Fierce and fast they followed on their fainting foe, and gave no quarter. The measure they had dealt to others was now dealt to them. Thousands upon thousands lay dead ; but still pressed on that fearful standard bearer, and thousands were yet to fall. And the sun rolled on to the west through that long May day, and made no comment. It went down, and that terrible carnage had not ceased which has left so imperishable a record in the memory of the Wiltshire peasant, that none ever now pass Slaughter-ford without a shudder and a prayer. Never again was Neot seen on earth.

A merry peal rung out from the bells of Wedmore,<sup>1</sup> and fast came crowding in the people from all the country round ; for this was the glad day when God's servants in all the earth meet together to acknowledge the glory of the Eternal Trinity ; and to offer prayers for the defence of the true faith of the Church of Christ, for ever and ever. And this day too in England were to be offered public thanksgivings to God for its great deliverance from the heathen. Scattered on the plain before the town lay the tents of the Saxon army ; and smiled in the bright sunshine ; and banners were waving, and all were dressed in holiday array and looked blithe and happy. Nature had dressed herself in her gayest suit, the earth looked greener, the birds carolled more lively ; all creation seemed to have

<sup>1</sup> There is reason to think *Westminster* is the place intended by this word.

joined together in one glad tribute of thanksgiving. The great Church was thronged with people ; knights and earls, and all the chivalry of West Saxony were gathered in the aisles for the festival, and to witness the great offering which was to be made there that day. Priests and Bishops so long lain in hiding places for fear of the Danes, came forth again, and now stood in their white robes before the altar. Breathless were they all with expectation, as the great west door rolled back, and the procession appeared. Two and two, with slow and solemn step, a long row of men whose garb announced them candidates for holy baptism, advanced towards the font, king Alfred leading them ; and every heart beat high, and every eye was fixed on that down-cast man who walked hand in hand with him. There was not one of them who knew not the fierce monarch of the Danes, whose ear had not tingled at the name of Guthrum : his head was bare ; the raven plume so fearfully familiar amidst scenes of slaughter and desolation, no longer waved over that princely forehead ; the eye that had flashed forth lightning fires, now beamed with the mild light of penitence and hope. Thirty of Norway's boldest sons attended him, with like demeanour of submission, and the whole train arranged themselves round the font, and knelt and prayed. Then, from beside the high altar, rose the noble bishop Wulfhen, and swept majestically down the aisle, through the wondering multitude, until he reached the kneeling group. With stately step he passed within the circle, and stood beside the font, while with one consent, these haughty warriors forswore their gods, and made profession of the Christian faith. Alfred stood sponsor for the king, and the bishop sprinkled him with the water of purification, and signed him with

the sign of the cross, and he rose up from the ground, Guthrum no longer, but Christian Athelstan. Athelstan, of all names dearest to Alfred, as that which had once belonged to his deliverer, now he chose for his reconciled enemy, in the hope it might bring a blessing on him. In like manner, the thirty warriors were admitted into the Church of Christ, and then all turned and took the oath of fealty to England's sovereign ; Danes and Saxons, joined in Christian brotherhood, swore eternal peace, and loud pealed the organ at that joyful sight, and from all the multitude assembled, swelled up with one consent to the everlasting God a hymn of gratitude and joy.

## A LEGEND OF

# St. Bartholomew,

HERMIT AT FARNE, A.D. 1193.

ANY one who reads the Prophets will see that, while all that relates to the humiliation of our most Blessed Lord, is most literally fulfilled, the accomplishment of those prophecies which foretell the external glories of His Church is a matter of faith. Where is the kingdom of peace, of justice and righteousness which was to trample upon the oppressor and the warrior? The Church is all this imperfectly, and in tendency; the wickedness of man has spoilt for a time the work of God. But notwithstanding all this misery, the prophecies of Christ's kingdom have found a more complete accomplishment in Christ's Saints, who have all been peaceful, compassionate and zealous for justice. Kings and warriors have literally bowed down before the Saints who have taken up against them the cause of the poor and the widow. And so it may be also that other parts of prophecy which are commonly interpreted figuratively, have received in a measure a literal fulfilment. For instance, those parts of scripture which relate to the animal creation may have been fulfilled much more literally than is commonly supposed, in some of Christ's hidden Saints who have given up all for His



sake. In proportion as the knowledge of the Lord has filled the earth, so also may Christ's little ones have walked unharmed among beasts of prey, or by their gentleness won to their sides the shyest of the inhabitants of the forest or the rock. If Christ's servants have for His sake dwelt in "the habitation of dragons and the court of owls,"<sup>1</sup> where "the wild beasts of the desert met the wild beasts of the island," what wonder if "the beast of the field have honoured them, the dragons and the owls,"<sup>2</sup> "the cormorant and the bittern."<sup>3</sup> He who dwells for Christ's sake in the desert, "where the satyrs cry unto their fellows," in the dry places where he seeks rest who can find none, must not be surprised if he sees strange shapes and hears startling sounds. And many of the words and actions of our blessed Lord seem to show that it is dangerous to pronounce too soon that the language of scripture is figurative, while at the same time they show such a strange connexion between evil spirits and the animal creation, that power over the one would seem to imply a power over the other. During those wonderful days which he spent in the wilderness, he was with the wild beasts as well as with devils. He saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven, and with His leave beings who had once been angels entered into the filthiest of beasts. So also the eyes of His Saints may have been opened to see the shame of the fallen archangel; and what wonder if under shapeless and uncouth forms he strives to scare from his knees the Saint whose prayers and fasts abridge his usurped dominion.

So also other prophecies connected with the opening of the invisible world upon the Saints, may have been

<sup>1</sup> Is. xi. 6.    <sup>2</sup> Is. xxxiv. 13, 14.    <sup>3</sup> Is. xviii. 20.    Is. xxxiv. 11.

more literally fulfilled than is commonly believed. It has been foretold that the sons and daughters of the Church should prophesy, that the young men should see visions and the old men dream dreams; we need not therefore be startled at meeting with such things in the history of Christendom in any age. It is true indeed that from the moment that our blessed Lord disappeared from the sight of the disciples, that became an object of faith which before had been seen and handled, even the glorified body of Him who is at the right hand of God; yet we know that He has been pleased, to show Himself in the reality of that body to His apostles, St. Paul and St. John. Nay one day every eye shall see Him; there is therefore nothing contrary to faith in supposing that even He may have appeared in visions to His Saints.

All these openings of the invisible world, whether of good or of evil beings, are of course subject to the present imperfection of our nature, and yet this does not interfere with the reality of them. Our notions of the ever-blessed Trinity are most dark and imperfect, embodied in human words and human ideas, and yet this does not prevent there being in them a truth real and objective, which we know can be as little the creation of our mind as material things which we see and touch. So again there have been false Christs and false teachers, yet there is also the One True Christ with the holy Doctors of the Church. The visions seen and the voices heard by the Saints are expressed in terms, so to speak, of Time and Space to which we are at present bound, so that it is often hard to distinguish them from the phantoms of imagination. The clear spiritual vision which the Saints possess habitually, may enable them to discern heavenly things so vividly that their

meditations may sometimes take the nature of ecstasy, without its being possible to fix the exact limits where contemplation ends and vision begins. Again noises are heard in the stillness of the night, which are drowned in the busy hum of day ; and they may have been mistaken for supernatural sounds ; the chill night air may have cramped the limbs of a Saint as he knelt on the cold stones before an altar, and he may have attributed it to the agency of the wicked one. He may in these instances have been sometimes right and at other times wrong, but it would be foolish and faithless to reject at once the notion that the devil had troubled a Saint at his prayers. Here at least we cannot weigh our enlightened *experience* against the testimony of a superstitious monk in a benighted age, for what experience have we of nights spent on the cold ground in prayer ? As well might the Indian prince urge the experience of his tender limbs against the fact that the hardy Englishman ever has to bear the pinching of ice and snow. Again let no one trouble himself about the danger of fanaticism ; these are not practical questions to us ; when we have hermits and monks among us, then let us begin to be anxious about drawing the line between false visions and true.

All this is a fitting introduction to the life of a Saint which contains in it many startling and even grotesque stories, which yet rest on contemporary authority. No flaw is to be found in dates,<sup>4</sup> and many personages flit

<sup>4</sup> The date of St. Bartholomew's death is remarkably fixed by the circumstance mentioned in his life, that he died in a year on which the Feast of St. John Baptist was on the seventh Thursday after Ascension-day, which must therefore have fallen on the sixth of May, and Easter on the twenty-eighth of March.

across the wild scene who appear elsewhere as real beings of flesh and blood in the pages of history. The life of St. Bartholomew is written by a monk, who mentions several persons from whom he had heard what he relates, and who had got their intelligence from the lips of the Saint himself. The stories rest on various authorities, some on the testimony of the rude fishermen who lived on his island, others on that of his friends ; but it is time that the reader should judge for himself.

### 1. *Brother Bartholomew in the world.*

Among the hermits of the twelfth century, Bartholomew is a remarkable personage ; his character stands out clear and distinct amidst the strange tales told about him, one not unvarying. We may feel startled and disgusted that such a figure with an ill smell of goatskins should come betwixt the wind and our nobility ; but, turn away as we will, there he still stands to reproach our sloth and luxury, the genuine product

This only happened twice in the twelfth century, viz. in 1182 and 1193. Thus far the Bollandists ; but the date is still further fixed to 1193 by the fact that he was forty-two years and six months in the island of Farne ; now if he had died in 1182, he would have left Durham in 1140, which cannot be, as it is expressly stated that he quitted the monastery under Prior Laurence, who did not succeed to the office till 1149. There is a manuscript in the Bodleian Library in which the life of the Saint is inscribed by the author, to Bertram, Prior of Durham. This proves that the life was written under the very Prior, in whose time the Saint died. The same manuscript gives the name of the author at full length, and verifies the conjecture of the Bollandists that it was Galfridus.

of an age of faith. He was not always St. Bartholomew ; his parents, whose condition is unknown, gave him the name of Tosti. He was born at Whitby, in Yorkshire, in the early part of the twelfth century. The north of England, in the reign of our early Norman kings, was the stronghold of all that was Saxon ; this circumstance, as well as his name, makes it probable that he was of old English blood ; but his companions laughed at the quaint sound of the Saxon boy's name, and his parents changed it for the Norman name of William. In his boyhood and youth he was of a wild and stubborn character, brought on probably by the jests of his playfellows, and he cared but little about spiritual things. Our blessed Lord however did not leave him without warning. One night he dreamed that he was in a place of surpassing beauty, and that there rose before him an intense light, like a cloud of dazzling white, or the dawn of a beautiful day. As he gazed on its splendour, he saw our blessed Lord standing on high, and near Him Mary His mother, and the apostles Peter and John. Then the blessed Virgin looked upon him with a sweet countenance and bade the Apostles lead him to her. When he stood before her who was called by Christ the mother of His beloved disciple, and who is the mother of all whom He has loved eternally, then with a sweet voice she said to him, Follow thou the steps of my Son, that He may have pity on thee, and pray humbly to Him who is merciful. Then William fell on his face and cried three times, Lord Jesus, have mercy upon me ; and the Lord lifted up His hand and blessed him. Twice did this vision appear to him in his sleep, and once when he was awake ; but great as was the impression made upon his mind, it bore no open fruit till many

years after. Instead of seeking quiet in the bosom of a monastery, his spirit was still restless and untamed. He left his country, and in quest of adventures went into Norway, then the refuge of many discontented spirits of Saxon blood.<sup>5</sup> He had not long been there however, when he put himself under the direction of a priest of the country, and made such spiritual progress under him, that the Bishop of the place ordained him priest. Still there was much in him to subdue; his spirit was one which delighted to wrestle with the storms which howl through the forests of those savage regions, and his curiosity was roused by the dark superstitions which lingered among them. He was once walking with a youth, who suddenly exclaimed that he saw an evil spirit. Friend, I would fain see him, was the answer of the priest. The youth said, Put thy feet upon mine, that thou touch not the ground, and thou shalt see him not only now but always. Then William laughed aloud when he thought of the strange companion which his friend wished to provide for him. He afterwards used to relate that he bethought himself just in time that his faith would be in danger, if he, a Christian priest, had an evil spirit ever before his eyes. This seems to have contributed to sober his mind, and he began to think of settling in life, as it is called. The marriage of priests, though forbidden by the canons, was not then so uncommon as it afterwards became; and he cast his eyes on one of the fair damsels of Norway. The maiden smiled upon him, and the father favoured his suit, but Christ had other views for

<sup>5</sup> Simeon Dunelm. in. ann. 1074. The same authority states that English priests were in great request in Norway.

His servant, and from some unknown cause, he left Norway unmarried.

Three years had passed over him since he quitted his native country, and he came back to it a priest and an altered man; and almost as soon as he had landed in England he for a few days officiated in a Church in Northumberland. Still however he had not found his place in Christ's kingdom; the vision with which his Lord had favoured him in his youth rushed upon his mind. This seemed to mark him out for some extraordinary mode of life, and with the energy which ever characterized him, he at once set out for Durham, where he entered as a novice the Cathedral monastery. Here when with his newly shaven head and his Benedictine habit, he entered the Church with the rest of the novices, and as was the custom at Durham, prostrated himself before the high altar; it seemed as if the figure on the crucifix stretched out its arms to welcome this new soldier of the cross. The name which he took in religion was Bartholomew, after the holy Apostle, and he soon won the hearts of the brethren by the gentleness which now appeared in his character, and by his fervour at the divine office. He had remained for a year in the monastery, training up his soul to obedience and humility, when he was called away to another and sterner scene. St. Cuthbert appeared to him one night in a dream, and bade him go to the island of Farne to lead the life of a hermit. Next morning he enquired of the brethren where this island lay, for he had never heard of it. He then went to Prior Laurence and begged for leave to quit the monastery, to live henceforth on that spot where St. Cuthbert lived and died. The good Prior shook his head: a hermit's life was not one for a novice, nor was

Farne so pleasant an abode as one who had never seen it might fancy. Brother Bartholomew's earnestness however at length prevailed, and with the Prior's leave, and the prayers of the convent, he set out for his new abode, early in December, 1151, and in the first week of Advent.

## 2. *Of the isle in which brother Bartholomew lived.*

If ever monks had a prospect of happiness, it was the monks of St. Mary and St. Cuthbert at Durham. The lazy old canons had been expelled and provided for elsewhere to make room for them, and the discipline of their monastery was at its height under a holy and learned Prior. The munificence of Kings and Bishops had placed them above secular cares; streams were bridged over, mills erected, and fish-ponds dug, for their sole use.<sup>6</sup> Villages were assigned to them,<sup>7</sup> where dwelt forty merchants to supply their wants, free of all the customs and tolls paid to the Bishop. Splendid buildings were rising about them on every side, and their chapter house had been but lately finished for their use.<sup>8</sup> Their altars blazed with gold and jewels, and on the high altar was a famous crucifix, adorned with gems by William the Conqueror. A greater contrast to this religious house than Bartholomew's new dwelling place can hardly be conceived. The island of Farne is described<sup>9</sup> as a circle of solid rock, the top of which is thinly strewn over with a layer of barren soil.

<sup>6</sup> See for instance the account of Ralph Flambard's works, *Anglia Sac.* p. 708.

<sup>7</sup> *Cart. ap. Dugdale*, vol. i. p. 237.

<sup>8</sup> *Anglia Sac.* vol. i. 709.

<sup>9</sup> This account applies only to the times of Galfridus.



On its south side it is separated by a channel of about two miles in breadth from the shore ; to the east and west a belt of rocks protect it from the fury of the sea, while on the north it lies open to the whole force of the waves, in the midst of which it lies like the broken and defenceless hull of a shipwrecked vessel. Sometimes when the tide rises higher than usual, and the wild storms of that rugged coast come in to its aid, the waves make an inroad on the land, and the salt foam is blown over the whole island, wetting the shivering inhabitant to the skin, and penetrating the crevices of his habitation. Near the shelving beach which formed the landing-place, was a low hut of unhewn stone and turf, built by St. Cuthbert. A narrow path leads up through the rock into St. Cuthbert's chapel ; it was situated in a hollow so shut in on all sides by walls of naked rock, that nothing could be seen from thence of the wide waste of waters around, or of the landward prospect on the other side. St. Cuthbert was said by his own labour to have deepened the hollow, so that when he knelt in prayer he could see nothing but the blue sky, bright with stars, far over his head, or resting with its lowering clouds on the edge of this rocky chamber. Here also by his prayers a clear stream gushed from the hard rock, according to the promise of the Lord that He would give waters in the wilderness, and that it should spring forth to give drink to His people, to His chosen. Rough as was the material of which the island was formed, two springs welled from the depths of the rock, to which the sailors often came to water their ships ; and this seems to have been the only natural production on the spot which could be obtained without toil. This unpromising place was not likely to attract inha-

bitants or visitors, and pirates, sailors and fishermen seem to have been its chief occasional inmates.

Besides the drawbacks which have been mentioned, the place had an ill name, which would of itself have kept it lonely. It was said by the people of the country to be haunted. The islets around it were especially said to be the habitation of demons, and no fisherman would have dared to moor his skiff to them after night-fall. On one islet all shipwrecked mariners were buried, and there above all, the howls of evil spirits were said to have been heard mingling with the rise and fall of the blasts which swept over the long grass upon their graves. Here also amidst the fantastic wreaths of mist, the fishermen used to see strange figures clad in the hoods of monks, and with long beards pendant from their foul features, riding on goats and brandishing spears among the tombs; till crosses were planted in the sand all round the spot, and the demons as soon as they saw them, flitted around and wheeled away into the darkness. It is hard to say why demons should be supposed to haunt the graves of Christian mariners, but there were other and better reasons for thinking that the hermits of St. Cuthbert's isle were disturbed in their devotions by evil spirits. Christian corpses were more likely to scare away than to invite devils; but Satan would have an object in frightening away the Saint whose prayers were a thorn in his side. "He who," says the old monk, whose narrative we follow, "is led by the Spirit into the wilderness, must of necessity be tempted by the devil, and either practise himself in virtue, or quit this place which is made for virtue." The advance of Christianity had scared away the evil one, so that he hid himself in these lonely islets, as he had retired into the sandy

deserts of the Thebais, to the wonderful rock of St. Michael in Normandy, or the shaggy wood from the depths of which he was driven by St. Seine.

### 3. *How Bartholomew lived in his hermitage.*

Bartholomew did not find himself alone in his new abode ; a monk named Ebwin had established himself there before him. He had probably also belonged to the convent of Durham, the authorities of which were still the spiritual superiors of the hermits of Farne. From this person the new inmate obtained by no means a hearty welcome ; he was so much of a hermit that he would have no one to share his solitude, not even another hermit. Very few men can bear to be alone ; and without a special vocation, none should make the attempt. Even our blessed Lord did not go into the wilderness without being led thither by the Spirit. Many men however from fanaticism, and wilfulness, or because their temper has been soured by the ill treatment of the world, have lived and died in solitude. This is one of the strange freaks of ill-guided human nature, and can only be distinguished from religious loveliness by its fruits. Ebwin could live alone, but he could not bear to have a rival in his loneliness. He troubled Bartholomew's peace by bitter taunts, intending to tease him into anger, or to scare him away altogether. He however failed in his object ; a few years before he might have succeeded, but Bartholomew had learned to discipline himself to patience and meekness in the monastery of Durham. His patient endurance wore out the obstinacy of his companion ; the island could well have supported both, but Ebwin did not

love partnership, and fairly quitted Farne, leaving him alone.

The reader probably is curious to know what the brother Bartholomew could find to do in his new abode. The question however is easily answered; he had as much to do as any labourer who has to work for his daily bread. He had a cow to tend, and a field, which must be dug and be sown with barley, and his crops were to be reaped and gathered in when the harvest time came round. A strange labourer indeed he was with his monkish mantle, over which was thrown a rough and sleeveless cloak lined with shaggy skin! When he laid down the spade or reaping hook, his labours were not over; he had a boat in which he wrestled with the wild waves which run violently among the islets and rocks along the coast, or paddled over the smooth sea when it lay bright and glittering beneath the summer sun. Thus he was fisherman, grazier and labourer all at once, and as will appear by and by, he combined the office of pilot as well. But whatever he was doing, the wind might drive the rain and the spray, and the sun might shed its burning beams upon his head, which was never covered by cowl or cap. This however was but his external employment. There are wonders in the spiritual world of which men unused to meditation have no conception, and which are to be the employment of the blessed in heaven. Even on earth the holy doctors have spent their lives in drawing them out in words; the cherubim desire to look into them; no one then need be surprised if a hermit could find occupation in wondering at such mysteries as the Holy Trinity and all the events involved in the Incarnation of the Lord. Every day he offered up the immaculate Lamb in sacrifice to

His Father on the altar of St. Cuthbert's oratory. All day long, whatever he was doing, and a great part of every night, he was either singing the psalms of David or kneeling in intercessory prayer. The words of the psalms were sweeter than honey to his throat, and he felt them burning in his heart the more he repeated them, so that he said the whole psalter every day once, twice, or even three times.

While he was thus striving to have his conversation in heaven, he took care to take up his cross with Christ, lest his troubles should degenerate into a luxurious self-contemplation. He who suffers with the Lord feels quite sure of the reality of heaven, and Bartholomew bearing his cross over the rugged stones of Farne, sympathized, so to speak, with Him who was dead and is alive, in a way which few can understand. A rough shirt of hair was worn by him next to his skin; the few hours which he could spare from psalmody and prayer during the night, were spent upon a pallet from which the hardiest of the world's soldiers would have shrunk. It was simply a few bed coverings thrown upon a hurdle; surely no very loud alarm would be needed to rouse a man from such a bed as this. Long fasts and a perpetual abstinence from meat subdued his body to his soul; for the first few years of his sojourn on the island, he used to eat the fish which he had caught by his own labour; but he afterwards gave up even this poor indulgence. Prayer and fasting are the weapons appointed by our blessed Lord to subdue every kind of evil spirit. He Himself, though clothed in the flesh that had sinned was invincible, because He was the Lord from heaven; and yet He fasted for forty days, and at last felt the pangs of hunger before he encountered the wily tempter. How then could His ser-

vant fare in the place of devils without putting on the armour which the Lord had sanctified for his use.

4. *How brother Bartholomew was not always alone.*

Stern as was his mode of life, Bartholomew's body was not worn, nor his spirit broken; his face, instead of being pale and emaciated, had a healthful colour; "so that," says the monk, "one would have supposed him to have pampered his body on dainties." Sadness he ever accounted to be a sin, and his blithe countenance and cheerful speech bore witness to the doctrine which he professed. And he soon found that hermit as he was, he would have numerous opportunities of testing his kindness of heart and sweetness of temper. The island had ever been from time to time visited by Norwegian and Danish sailors, and the poor fishermen who lived on the opposite coast often came to pray in St. Cuthbert's oratory before they began their work of toilsome labour. These were the poor ones of the earth, and the hermit delighted in instructing them. When the northern sailors were windbound in this rugged part, he soothed their impatience and even from his own little store contrived to help them when their provisions failed. He once even killed his cow, when he had nothing else to set before some poor strangers who had nothing to eat. His kindness won the hearts of the rough sailors, and his holiness taught them reverence for the Lord whose servant he was. Christ also enlightened the hermit's soul, so that he was able to foretell the dangers of the weather; and if he bade them go in God's name and blessed them, they would always set sail though the black clouds scudded across,

the sky, and the winds howled and the waves were dashed against the capes which stretched beyond each other along the shore. They applied to him in every difficulty, and he thus had numerous opportunities of tempering their ferocity; they believed that all his warnings came to pass, and hardly durst disobey him. On one occasion a boy, belonging to a vessel, had gone down into the boat to fish, and had forgotten to tie it to the stern; the consequence was, that the boy was carried off by the current among the rocks and shoals. The poor sailors as usual came to the hermit's cell, and cried out, "Brother Bartholomew, come and help us." He came out smiling and said, "Why do ye call me, and what will ye have me do?" On hearing of their trouble, he accompanied them on board their vessel, and (though it does not appear how) the boy and the boat soon appeared safe and sound. The captain immediately seized on the lad and took up a stick to punish him severely. The hermit stayed the hand of the brutal man, and bade him remember that no one was to be punished in this holy island. The captain replied that he was not in the island, but on the deck of his vessel: and although the holy man foretold that he should suffer for his cruelty, he beat the boy unmercifully. When the vessel returned, the sailors told brother Bartholomew that the captain had died the second day of the voyage. It was not long however before the fame of his sanctity brought visitors of a different stamp from his poor friends the sailors. Every man who lives under a sense of right and wrong must often have been troubled not only with temptations to visitations of duty, but with perplexities as to what in particular cases is his duty. He who lets himself quietly float down the stream of life, knows nothing of the

mysteries of his own being, and of the troubles which may arise in the soul of a Christian apparently without external cause; but they who venture more boldly forth for Christ's sake, soon find that they have an inward as well as an outward cross to bear. "They who go down to the sea in ships, and occupy their business in great waters, these men see the wonders of the Lord in the deep." The soul of the penitent too is in fearful need of guidance when first the whole horrors of sin bursts upon it. For cases such as these, Christianity has created a science of spiritual things, and all the fearful diseases of the religious mind have been examined and classified by Catholic doctors. Yet after all none is so well qualified to carry the theory of this science into practice as he who has learnt by intense self-examination, and by spiritual asceticism to know himself and the wiles of the tempter. It is a gentle craft which soothes the aching soul, and pours oil and wine into the wounds of him who has been half dead; and Bartholomew soon found that his fame as a physician brought men from all parts to kneel at his feet. Men of all ranks came before him in this tribunal of confession, and many a high born oppressor of the poor bowed down, and trembled before the goat-skin garment of the poor hermit. Who but such a confessor could have forced men like the wild border barons of the north to relax their iron grasp on the spoils of the poor and to atone for their sins by penance? Nor was this all: many a poor monk who was afflicted with dryness of heart, and went through his offices with listlessness and distaste, was taught by him to be patient till Christ visited his soul with the waters of consolation.

The sweet gentleness of his temper was such that it appeared in his countenance and his gait. Even the



wild birds on the sea shore learned not to fly away at the approach of the figure, which glided gently by them on the sea-shore, or so often remained immovable wrapt in contemplation. The habits of the sea gulls and cormorants which abound on that lonely island seem to have struck Galfridus with admiration. The eyder ducks especially raised his wonder; they came regularly at certain seasons in large flocks to deposit their eggs, and while sitting on their nests never feared the approach or even the touch of man. When however the young ones were hatched, they became as wild as ever, and the whole party took to the waters again, and migrated from the island. Bartholomew allowed no one to cast stones at the birds; he even tamed one of them, which came regularly to feed out of his hand every day. Unfortunately however when he was out fishing, a hawk pursued this poor bird into the chapel, and killed it, leaving the feathers and the bones lying on the portal of the holy place. The assassin however could not find his way out of the chapel, and kept wheeling round and round the building, beating against the windows and the walls. At this time brother Bartholomew entered and found the cruel bird with its talons and bill still bloody. He mourned bitterly over the fate of his poor favourite, and caught the hawk; he kept it for two days without food, to punish it for its crime, and then, seized with compassion, let go his guilty prisoner. At another time the Saint was sitting on the sea shore, when he was surprised to feel a cormorant close by his side, pulling with its bill the corner of his garment. He rose and followed the bird along the beach, till he came to a hole in the rock down which one of the young ones had fallen. He soon extricated

the trembling bird from its danger, and restored it to its mother.

As brother Bartholomew had taken upon himself that mode of life of which our blessed Lord gave a model when he retired into the wilderness, so he suffered also the same sort of temptations. The wild and lonely island on which he served Christ, had always, as we have said, the reputation of being the special abode of evil spirits. Desolate places have often an ill name; amid the hum of worldly occupations and the glare of day, Satan appears not, for men think not of him, and why should he arouse them from their security? but when men of God retire into desolate places to serve Christ, then Satan unmask himself, for they have no lethargy in which he would leave them, and they have ventured into the wilderness, his own peculiar dwelling place. They are his open enemies, and he has been known to meet them openly. As the devil under loathsome shapes had striven to frighten away St. Antony, so he attacked Bartholomew. Foul and hideous shapes of wild beasts seemed to frisk about him when he was at his prayers; and frightful visages grinned upon him out of the darkness. He often felt a hand plucking his cowl when he was on his knees, and even at the very altar the devil strove to divert his attention by seizing the border of his chasuble. One dark morning, when matins were over, and the lamp in the oratory was extinguished, as he was lying prostrate on the steps of St. Mary's altar, he felt a weight over all his limbs and a choking sensation in his throat, which he ever attributed to the evil spirit. For some time he was unable to speak, but at last he shook off the impediment, and cried upon St. Mary for help. This is but a specimen of the attacks under which he suffered, and against

which his only weapons were the sign of the cross and the holy water, with which he sprinkled his cell.

*5. How Prior Thomas lived and died at Farne.*

For five years did the hermit remain at Farne, the only inhabitant of the island ; but events were taking place at Durham which were to furnish him with a companion in his hermitage. The Prior Laurence had died in the meanwhile, and had been succeeded by Prior Absolon, who had died also, and had left the dignity to a brother of the monastery, named Thomas. Up to this time internal peace seems to have reigned at Durham, but now they had got a Bishop who seemed anxious to be Bishop and Prior at once. The Priors of Durham were great men indeed : when William of Carilpho replaced the secular canons with lay monks of St. Benedict, he gave the Prior all the ancient rights of the dean and chapter, and many more besides. Many fair manors and broad lands were then given to the convent and carefully separated from the property of the see. Over these the Prior had the rights of a feudal baron, with Sak and Sok, Tol and Theam, and Infangthief, and<sup>1</sup> all the various powers which have to our ears a most barbarous sound, but which nevertheless conveyed a most substantial privilege. Besides which the Prior sat in a stall on the left hand side of the choir, with all the rights of an Abbot ; he appointed all the officials of the convent, and he officiated at the

<sup>1</sup> Sok and Sak imply the right of holding a court, Tol, that of levying tolls. Theam that of restraining and judging bondsmen. Infangthief, that of punishing a thief caught on one's own fief.

altars of the Cathedrals as in his own Church. But though the Prior of Durham was a great man, the Bishop was a greater, and a prelate now sate on the throne who was disposed to make the most of his authority. Hugh Pudsey had been vehemently opposed by the Cistercian interest, that is, by Henry Archbishop of York, and by St. Bernard, but on the death of Eugenius had succeeded in obtaining the confirmation of his election from his successor. He was a magnificent prelate, and afterwards offered Richard to accompany him at the head of his own troops to the Holy Land. The warlike monarch however preferred the Bishop's money to his personal services, and left him behind as High Justiciar of England. It should be said, however, for Hugh Pudsey, that the monks do not seem to have disliked, though they feared him; at least he did not go so far as his successor, who turned away the water courses of the monks, attempted to force his way into the chapter, and all but plucked the Prior down from the altar one feast of St. Cuthbert.<sup>2</sup> However Hugh Pudsey seems to have reigned absolute in the Abbey, and when the Prior Thomas opposed his will, the monks were weak enough to allow him to be deposed in direct violation of their original charter. Thomas, weary of the bickerings and cabals among which he had been living, determined to spend the rest of his days in strict penitence at Farne.

The coming of this new inmate was a trial to Bartholomew; he had as yet been uncontrolled in his religious exercises, he had now to consult the comfort of another. It was now to be proved whether he was so wedded to his austerities as not to give up as many of

<sup>2</sup> Anglia Sacra, vol. i. 728.

them as were shown to be against the will of God. He began well, for he threw off the hair shirt which he had now worn for five years, because from long usage it had become foul and fetid, and would disgust his companion. An unhappy cause of discussion however occurred, which marred the harmony even of this small society. Thomas could not bear the long fasts to which Bartholomew was accustomed, and Bartholomew would not remain at his meals so long as Thomas wished. The ex-Prior, though the brother in every respect gave up to his will, grew angry and called him a hypocrite. Bartholomew remained silent under his reproaches, but could not wait to endure them; he fled back to the monastery of Durham, and the brethren were one day astonished to see this strange figure rise up as it were from the invisible world among them. Thomas immediately recognized his fault, and bewailed the loss of his companion with tears. It was not however till the Prior entreated, and the convent commanded, and the Bishop warned, that brother Bartholomew could be prevailed upon to return to Farne. This affair was however of use to both: Thomas learned to command his temper, and Bartholomew also learned a lesson of patience. From that day forth they lived together in the greatest harmony. Another advantage was gained; the convent promised to supply them with a stock of provisions and a suit of clothes every year, so that he could now give alms and better supply the wants of his friends the sailors from the produce of his own labour. It is not known how long Thomas remained on the island; it is probable however that his weary pilgrimage was soon ended. The closing scene of it is all that is recorded. A brother of the convent, who was present, relates that while angels floated before the eyes of

the dying man, Bartholomew, who was watching by his side, saw a foul and hideous monster crouching in a corner of the room, and mourning over the future glory of the soul which was passing away ; and it was some time before he could drive it away with the holy water which lay as usual near the bed of death.

6. *How brother Bartholomew closed his days in peace.*

The even tenor of a hermit's life does not admit of much variety, and little remains to be told though he lived in all forty-two years and six months on the island. Towards the close of his life the invisible world seems several times to have opened upon him in visions. William, a monk of Durham, related to Galfridus, how in the dead of night he was reciting with Bartholomew the office of the blessed Virgin, when he saw through the east window the sky shining with an intense supernatural blaze, which lighted the whole of the dark oratory. The same brother also related to Galfridus a vision which he had heard from the hermit's lips. Bartholomew said that on the joyful night of our Lord's nativity, after having said the midnight mass, he had quitted St. Cuthbert's chapel to see if morning had yet dawned upon the sea, and it was time to begin the second mass ; on returning to the oratory he was astonished to see at the altar a priest of a venerable aspect in pontifical vestments ready to officiate. In awe and wonder he drew near, and the priest went through the Holy Sacrifice, and then vanished away leaving on Bartholomew's mind the certainty that the blessed Cuthbert had descended to officiate in the chapel in which he had passed so many hours when on

earth. All these things prepared the hermit to expect his end, and he felt quite sure that he was to die, when one night as he was watching in prayer, his bell rung three times with a low and gentle sound, though no human hand had touched it. Shortly after this, on Ascension-day, 1193, he fell ill, though his disease seems to have been old age rather than any other. He told some of his visitors that his end was approaching, and the brethren of Lindisfarne from that moment often came to see him; some monks of Coldingham whom he especially loved, also came to visit him for the last time. For seven weeks during which his illness lasted, he neither ate nor drank. For many years before, he had had no bed but the hard ground, and now he would not allow one to be made, but remained in a sitting posture, sometimes even rising and walking about. But whatever he did he was wrapt in prayer, and hardly spoke at all. Shortly before he died, the brethren who were standing around were frightened by strange and loud noises on the roof, and one fancied that a shapeless form had alighted on the ground, close behind him. The servant of God roused himself, and said, "Wretch, what dost thou here? thou hast lost thy labour, for thou canst find nothing in me." The brethren asked him where he would be buried; he answered, "I would have my body lie here, where I hope that my spirit will be received by its Creator, and where I have fought during a very little time for the Lord, and have suffered many tribulations for that consolation which is in heaven." On the feast of the Nativity of St. John Baptist, he fell asleep in the Lord. As soon as his soul had passed away, a brother of Lindisfarne dreamed that Bartholomew was dead. He immediately aroused the convent, and a party of monks at once manned a

little vessel, and crossed the waters which separate Farne from the Holy Island. When these hooded sailors had brought their vessel into the little harbour, they found that the brother had spoken truth. Bartholomew was lying dead; not far from him, they found a stone coffin which he had some time before procured. When it had arrived, he had laid himself down full length within it, and had found that it was too short. With his own hands he then had chiselled out the stone till it was large enough to contain his whole body. In this coffin which he had prepared, they now laid him with many tears.<sup>3</sup> He was buried on the south side of the chapel, close to the fountain which sprung from the earth at St. Cuthbert's prayers. There his body probably still lies, forgotten and unknown. The spirit however of the holy men who once lived in Farne seems still to dwell there. It was on Bartholomew's island that that christian maiden lived who not many years ago ventured her life to save the crew of a shipwrecked vessel, and whom God has now taken to Himself.

<sup>3</sup> This last circumstance is mentioned in the Bodleian manuscript before mentioned. The Bollandists unfortunately lost the last pages of their manuscript, and therefore only copied the close of the Saint's life from Capgrave. It should be added, that the Bollandists mention several English martyrologies in which St. Bartholomew is named on the 24th of June.



WIVES of the

mansueti hereditabant terram, et

delectabuntur in multitudine pacis.



ENGLISH SAINTS

PAULINUS, EDMUND,  
 ÆTHELBURGH, OSMUND, OSMUN,  
 ERBB, HAMMOR, BEGH



# LIVES

OF

## THE ENGLISH SAINTS.



St. Paulinus.

St. Oswin.

St. Edwin.

St. Ebba.

St. Ethelburga.

St. Adamnan.

St. Oswald.

St. Bega.

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MANSUETI HEREDITABUNT TERRAM, ET DELECTABUNTUR IN  
MULTITUDINE PACIS.

LONDON:

JAMES TOOVEY, 192, PICCADILLY.

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1844.

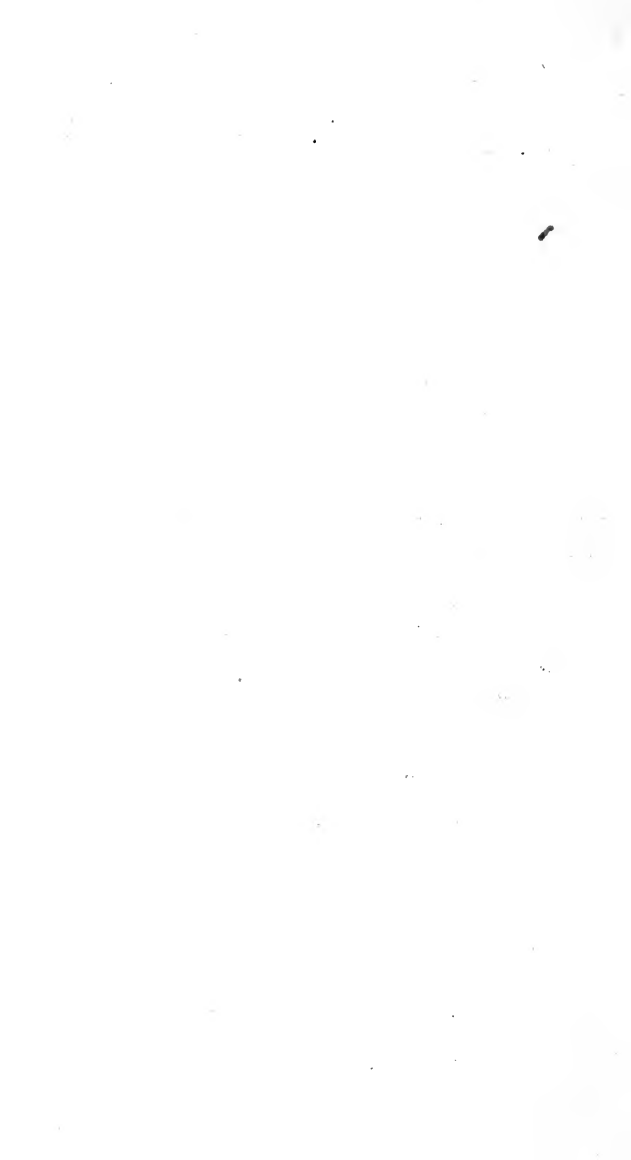
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THE LIFE OF

**St. Paulinus,**

ARCHBISHOP OF YORK, A.D. 644.

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To the ecclesiastical scholar there is something mournfully striking in the sight of a modern map of his native country. Travelling northward from the metropolis, on the western side of the island, his eye runs through an almost continuous chain of manufacturing towns, the spiritual destitution of whose dense population presents problems, both of a political and ecclesiastical kind, as difficult as they are distressing, and which seem to stand out the more distinctly from the background of wealth, luxury, and refinement created by these very multitudes. On this side there is little to remind us of the labors of St. Chad or St. Wilfrid. Whereas, if we look down the eastern shore of England, the eye is still conducted pleasantly from one holy home to another, always finding nigh at hand some monument of old munificence, some beautiful relic of catholic ages. Cambridge and Ely, Peterborough and Lincoln, seem to afford resting-points to the eye between London and York; and the view of that wonderful minster rising far off above the woody level is most grateful after the unsightly disorder of those huge towns, which only seems to typify the moral disorder, the civil discontent and religious discord of the people within.

But we should be unearnest men indeed if the feelings excited by such prospects rested in mere antiquarian regrets, or were the parents of no worthier offspring than a few architectural societies, through whose well-meant labors catholic ceremonial might shoot far ahead of catholic austerity, and so afford Satan a convenient hold to frustrate the revival of catholic truth amongst us. Rather we would hope by setting forth the deeds of the old missionary monks and holy founders of these glorious abbeys to provoke our own generation to a godly jealousy, and to plead the cause of our manufacturing districts most effectually by adorning the memory of those whose peaceful and conventual cities are after all but so many witnesses of what the old Saints did against difficulties hardly less than ours. And especially the monastic character of the early Saxon Church, by which the England of ancient times was subdued to the Cross, may intimate to us that, however lawful it may be in itself and, if so be, of primitive warrant, yet a sturdier weapon than a married clergy can alone hope to convert (for we may not use a milder word) the crowded multitudes of modern England.

Such thoughts naturally come to mind when we prepare to relate the acts of St. Paulinus of York. From the persecution of Diocletian, during which the father of Constantine died at York, we pass over the fortunes of that famous city, till the Easter Sunday of 627, when Paulinus baptized St. Edwin in his rude cathedral of wood, which through the grateful care of that monarch and the diligence of St. Oswald grew from its humble beginnings, and after multiplied changes, additions, and restorations, remains amongst us at this day, acknowledged as one of the most exquisite ecclesiastical buildings of Christendom.



The early history of St. Paulinus, before he was connected with England, is told in few words. He was in all probability a monk,<sup>1</sup> and apparently of the same house with St. Augustine of Canterbury. It was in the first year of the seventh century that the English archbishop sent his two ambassadors, Lawrence and Peter, to plead with the holy father, St. Gregory, for fresh laborers in the vineyard; and, after a year's delay at Rome, the pope sent back the messengers accompanied by twelve new apostles, many of whom were ordained to shine as lights in the Saxon Church, and by holy living and holy suffering to adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things. For among the twelve were Mellitus, Justus, and Paulinus.

Their journey, if we may judge by the pope's commendatory letters, partook of that irregularity which characterized all travelling in religious ages, when various shrines and places gifted with miracle attracted the pilgrim to the right or left, especially when bound on a difficult and perilous enterprise to extend the Church of Christ. It would seem that these holy monks (as we have ventured to assume that they were) passed by Marseilles, through a portion of the diocese of Tholouse, afterwards the scene of the great St. Dominic's labors among the heretic Albigenses, up the Saone, northward as far as Metz, and thence to Paris, where they were commended to the pious hospitality of king Clothaire, and Brunichildis, who had been formerly the queenly hostess of Augustine. They arrived in Kent in 601, and appear to have been honorably received by the good king Ethelbert, and his consort Adilberga, to both

<sup>1</sup> Eum fuisse monachum probabile, at exploratum non est.—*Mabill. Index SS. prætermis. in sæc. Ben. ii.*

of whom the pope had written, comparing them respectively to Constantine and Helena : though the personal character of the Saxon king seems to have had more of earnestness and sterling worth about it than that of the great emperor. The comparison, perhaps, was meant for the public rather than the private character of the king.

Truly the Church of Christ has antiquities of a more touching sort than those which the regal succession of any nation has to boast, even as her spiritual descent is more unbroken. The very monastic house, from which St. Gregory sent forth Augustine, and afterwards these new fellow-laborers, still remains set apart for sacred uses. With the Coliseum on its right and the gardens of the Cæsars on its left, and almost in view of the old Church of St. Clement where the Pelagian heresy, the offspring of a British monk, was formally condemned, the same site is at this day occupied by the white-robed Camaldolese. There at this day the simple-mannered and kind-hearted children of St. Romuald contemplate in silent austerity the mysteries of the catholic faith, while the solitary palm-tree on the hill close by stands like a beacon in the garden of the Passionists, who pray specially for England. From that same house of St. Gregory, where his altar and his rude dormitory still exist, the sixteenth Gregory has been raised to fill the chair of St. Peter ; yet when he dwells in the lordly Vatican, it is within the Saxon suburb of Rome, the Borgo (Burgh) where the English pilgrims once resided, and within which St. Peter's is included. Surely one may dwell innocently on these little things, when our isolation presses heavily upon us : it is a relief even for the imagination to play with names and places which testify conjointly of England and of catholic unity. And we too are, in one sense, the children of that house,

for we are living on the labors of the monks who came therefrom. Though fearful storms have swept by, and the sacrilege of schism is in our ears and before our eyes, we are struggling to maintain ourselves under the shadow of the tree which they planted. Woe unto us if we be not "watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die," lest peradventure our works be not "found perfect before God."

The next twenty-four years of Paulinus' life are involved in obscurity. He disappears entirely from our view, or to speak more wisely, is hidden with God, till 625. Yet it is not difficult to conjecture that his days were spent in active toil for the Church, for he lived among great deeds, and was an eyewitness of many things which gave consistency and character to the Saxon Church. The death of the great St. Gregory would hardly be unfelt by the Kentish laborers. The synod of Augustine's Oak drew a formal line between the British and the Saxon Christians. The conversion of king Sebert, the building of Westminster Abbey and St. Paul's, and the founding of Ely, the erection of the see of Rochester, and the death of St. Augustine, were all notable events which mark those four-and-twenty years in the history of our Church. But, if it was allowed to St. Paulinus to behold the Church thus taking shape and gathering strength, and doubtless himself to aid in the labor, there were darker scenes of which he was also a witness. Whether during that unhappy year after the apostacy of the kings Paulinus retired with Justus and Mellitus, an action which we do not know enough of to condemn, (for those we should sit in judgment on were Saints,) or whether he remained with St. Lawrence, we are not told: but, at all events, on Eadbald's repentance he

would without question be found in Kent, and during the five years which succeeded he probably labored for St. Lawrence.

There are few of the Saints in whose lives we do not find some such unhistorical interval as this ; and, if it makes no show on the pages of history, perhaps it may generally have been the most momentous period of their lives. Whether it has been spent in ascetic retirement or outward conflict, it has often been the season of probation, the vigil of their Christian knighthood, on which their whole future depended. Who knows what combats pass in these mystic deserts, or what gifts are won, communicating joy and health and sudden alacrity to the whole body of Christ ? St. Paul's days were not wasted in Arabia : and, to venture further, our Lord in St. Joseph's house was about His Heavenly Father's business. To us moderns this peculiarity in the lives of the Saints may suggest very wholesome thoughts. It rebukes that restless temper which begins by making all our good unsound, because it sets up our own will rather than God's will as the rule of the good we propose to do ; and ends by an irritable, schismatical and carnal spirit of proselytism, and a fretful course of duty self-imposed, because through disuse it has lost all faith in its invisible weapons of prayer and fasting and virginity for Christ's sake. Yet this very characteristic of the Saints' lives is, like most other things about them, singularly Christlike, reminding us of that silent but pregnant interval of eighteen years between His disputing with the doctors and His baptism by St. John, which the Evangelist comprehends in the one mystery of His obedience to His two creatures, St. Mary and St. Joseph, an interval wherein every day was full of actions which, because of

the Incarnation, were infinite humiliations, and each one by itself, as Liguori says, *therefore* sufficient for the redemption of the world.

It was in the year 625 that the ambassadors of king Edwin, yet a pagan, arrived in Kent to demand of king Eadbald the hand of his sister Ethelburga in marriage. Tempting as was the offer, from Edwin's fame and his spreading conquests, the Kentish monarch replied that it was not lawful to give a Christian virgin in marriage to a heathen, lest the faith and sacraments of the Heavenly King should be profaned by the company of a king who knew not the worship of the true God. Edwin was a man of no common temper, and with the natural sympathy which great minds have with high feelings took no offence at the rough answer. He sent a second time to promise that he would take no steps against the Christian faith, but that he would grant to the princess, her priests and her whole retinue, the free exercise of their own religion, and that should the new faith be found on examination holier and more worthy of God he would himself embrace it. This reply was considered satisfactory. Eadbald and Ethelburga might think it was a case to which the apostle's rule would apply, that the believing wife should sanctify the unbelieving husband. Moreover, it would of course be remembered by both of them that it was a woman who had paved the way for the introduction of the Gospel into Kent, and that by her marriage with an unbeliever. And, doubtless, they acted under the advice of St. Justus, their spiritual pastor: he would view it in the light of a means for amplifying the Holy Church, and for such an end Ethelburga would be willing to venture her worldly comfort by placing

herself in so difficult a position as that of a Christian queen in a heathen court.

It now became the duty of St. Justus to fix upon some new and worthy spiritual father, to whose care he should commit the Kentish princess, to guide her along the difficult way which for Christ's sake she was prepared to tread. He chose Paulinus, which would imply that he had already perceived in him some eminent qualifications for positions of trust and difficulty. In compliance with the recommendation of St. Gregory, given so far back as 601, Paulinus was ordained bishop of York, which see was to enjoy metropolitan honors. Of the life and demeanor of Paulinus in the heathen court we know next to nothing. But from what Bede says it would appear that he did not confine himself to building up Ethelburga and her Christian attendants in their most holy faith, but also labored zealously as a missionary bishop. His labors at that time were not blessed with any great success ; for while Bede testifies of him that he labored long time in the word, yet he adds that it fell out as the apostle said, "The god of this world blinded the minds of them that believed not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ should shine unto them." It is probable, however, that the exertions of Paulinus were silently bringing things into that mature state, which afterwards made the conversion of the Northumbrians almost national ; for the very language used at the conference of Godmundingham implies that the false religion had been for some length of time confronted with the Gospel, so that room had been given for a general scepticism to get root, and gain ground even among the priests.

Meanwhile pope Boniface was not unmindful of his office of universal bishop, nor inclined to neglect the

new church of St. Gregory's founding. In this same year he addressed letters to Edwin and Ethelburga, both of them noble compositions, and well deserving a place in that magnificent collection of Christian documents, the pontifical epistles.

It is not a little touching to contemplate the affectionate earnestness of these two letters, and to reflect upon the high sense of duty which prompted and sustained so minute a vigilance over the interests of the Gospel throughout the breadth of Western Christendom. The marriages of the little kings of the Saxon heptarchy, with its fluctuating policy and its shifting boundaries, were not overlooked at Rome. "The piety of Boniface," says Alford<sup>2</sup>, "passed the Alps and ocean that he might hasten the reward of faith in the northern part of the island, and that the provincials of Alla, whom Rome had erewhile seen in her forum, might have a new commerce with the chief city. It was not therefore Gaul, it was not Spain, it was not Germany, it was not the nearer inhabitants of Italy, who were anxious for the salvation of the Northumbrians, for they had not the bowels of a parent; but it was Rome, to whom Christ had given the prefecture of His sheep in Peter the chief. She, though more remote in place, yet by the privilege of her dignity, by the necessity of her office, and finally by the excellency of her love, was nearer to us in this kind of affection. Hence the reader may clearly understand who is the genuine mother of this island, and to whom it owes the birth of faith, to eastern Asia, or to western Rome. Truly, if she only, in Solomon's judgment, was the mother, whose bowels were moved, then this pious care lest Britain should

<sup>2</sup> ii. 216. ed. Leod.

perish shews that, not of Asia or of Greece, but of Rome only ought we to say, 'She is the mother thereof.' ”

It was now the second year of Paulinus' residence at the Northumbrian court. The interesting events of this year and the following (627), so well known through the touching narrative of St. Bede, belong rather to the life of St. Edwin than of Paulinus, notwithstanding that they are among the most important which befell the holy bishop. The attempted murder of St. Edwin, the queen's safe delivery on the night of Easter Sunday, the king's victory over Quichelm, and the unlooked-for fulfilment of a heavenly vision, as they chiefly illustrate the personal character of St. Edwin, so they are related in his life. It is sufficient to say here, that the infant princess Eanfleda, with twelve of her family, were the first-fruits of the Northumbrian mission, and were baptized on Whitsunday in 626 ; and that on Easter Sunday (627) king Edwin was himself baptized by Paulinus in his wooden cathedral, dedicated to St. Peter.

The six years which intervened between the baptism and the death of St. Edwin were in a Christian point of view most important to the north of England. It would seem as though the king made continual progresses through his dominions, taking Paulinus with him, and lending to his missionary labors the support of his presence and favor. First, going northward, we hear of the bishop being compelled to stop six-and-thirty days at one place in Northumberland, catechising the new converts, and baptizing them in the river Glen, near the village of Yeverin, where Edwin had a country-seat. But it would seem from the narrative of Bede that he reaped a yet greater harvest in Yorkshire itself, where the pure and beautiful river Swale was his font, in whose



rocky pools near Catterick Bridge, anciently Cataract, he baptized great multitudes of the Deiri, turning them, according to St. Gregory's prediction, from the wrath of God (*de ira Dei*). At Campodunum, where Edwin's palace stood, Paulinus built a church of stone, which was burnt by the pagans who killed St. Edwin. It was dedicated to St. Alban, for England had Christian antiquities even to the companions of St. Augustine; and Camden speaks of the black burnt appearance of the stones remaining in his day.

The conversion of the East Saxons and their king Eorpwald was brought about by the pious industry of Edwin, and seems to have taken place no long time<sup>3</sup> after his baptism. But the year after was marked by a still more signal success attending the preaching of Paulinus, in the conversion of Blecca, the governor of Lincoln, and the introduction of the Gospel into the parts south of the Humber. At Lincoln he built another church of stone, of beautiful workmanship, which was roofless in Bede's time, but visited by the faithful because of the power of miracle which resided there. From Lincolnshire the holy bishop extended his missionary labors into Nottinghamshire, baptizing great multitudes in the river Trent, and consecrating a church to our blessed Lady at Southwell.<sup>4</sup> And thus our Saint became the father of three famous ecclesiastical buildings, which have come down to our times, the cathedrals of York and Lincoln, and the minster of Southwell.

<sup>3</sup> Father Cressy however puts it under 632, after Alford; yet the narrative of Bede would seem to bring it nearer to Edwin's baptism, and as if in the fervor of his recent conversion.

<sup>4</sup> It is Camden's conjecture that the *Tiovulfingacestir* of Bede was Southwell.

The new church at Lincoln, even in its infancy, witnessed a scene of no little interest in English church history, the consecration of Honorius Archbishop of Canterbury, by St. Paulinus. It seems scarcely possible in the conflict of authorities to settle in what year this took place. Baronius is clearly right in saying that the pall was not sent to Paulinus before 633 ; and, apparently for the mere purpose of avoiding a difficulty, Harpsfield, Parker and Godwin fix the death of St. Justus to 634 ; but, as appears from the pope's letter to St. Edwin in 633, Honorius was already Archbishop of Canterbury, and the pall is sent to the two archbishops at once. Justus died, according to the most probable account, in 628, and without supposing a vacancy of five years, it seems to agree better with the several narratives to fix the consecration of Honorius to 629 ; and either the original instructions from Rome, on which St. Justus acted in consecrating Paulinus, or fresh commands sent on the death of St. Justus, may have warranted Paulinus in consecrating Honorius, and the pope's formal rule in 633, that when either of the archbishops returned to his Maker the survivor should ordain another in his room, may have been rather providing for a difficulty already experienced than a mere rule enacted for the first time, and apart from circumstances. But, however the question of the date may stand, the fact is undoubted that the first Archbishop of York consecrated the fifth Archbishop of Canterbury in the new and beautiful stone church of Lincoln.

How briefly, and almost abruptly, does history appear to sum up in its straightforward narrative the work of six long years ! Yet to monks, accustomed to hear what we should think the dry pages of the Martyrology read during their frugal meal, the list of names

and places and simple facts could supply ample matter for devotional meditation. The mould in which the lives of all the Saints is cast, notwithstanding an apparently infinite diversity, is, after all, one and the same, the likeness of their Lord ; and to men whose thoughts were conversant with that all day, each fact in the Martyrology was, so to speak, a key to itself : it opened out long trains of mingled thought and prayer, and cast the reader and the hearer more completely into the times and position of the Saint than labored accuracy of description or animation of style could possibly do. To us, unfortunately, the connection between our own days and those of the Saints has been rudely sundered ; and there is a romance about the past which goes far to destroy the real application of its ensamples to ourselves. Yet let any one, by a steady effort, realize to himself the rough, tiresome, commonplace difficulties which Paulinus had to overcome in evangelizing our northern counties, the rudeness of the times, the ignorance of the people, the inveteracy of their superstitions, their cold and unimpressive temper so discouraging to a hot-hearted Roman, the want of clergy, the absence of all the consolations which a missionary derives either from the splendid ceremonial of the Church, or in these days from rapid communication with the faithful in other parts. These, and a host of others which these suggest, could only be overcome by the single-minded energy of earnest faith ; and if multitudes, almost whole towns, exist now in those same northern counties to be rescued either from the delusions of schism, or even a neglected state of heathenism, the example of Paulinus may be of service to ourselves. A modern priest in a modern parish is first startled and then disheartened by the complicated errors of doctrine and discipline, and the end mostly is

that he becomes entangled in some part of the vicious system round him, and, as though the world's eye paralysed him, learns to acquiesce in the wretched, low views and principles which prevail about him. Now however seemingly different his outward position is, nevertheless it is substantially the same with that of a missionary ; and faith in the Church system, even the little faith which he has, brings about changes which surprise himself. But they who are tied to the world are tied to the times, and the doctrine that this or that is unfit for these times eats out the very heart of faith. Hence it is that the most successful missionaries have generally been monks. Monks do not believe in the world ; its ways do not fetter them ; its example does not overawe them. They do what we should call odd unpractical things, and, strange to say ! these very things succeed through the hearty good-will with which they are pushed forward ; while the more intelligible discretion of their contemporaries receives the admiration of the world, and bequeaths nothing to posterity. Their singularity, like Samson's lock, appears to contain their strength.

Unlike the labors of many of the missionary Saints, the toils of St. Paulinus do not seem to have been accompanied, so far as we know, by any copious display of miraculous power ; at least not in any such way as to have come strikingly forward to account for the great success of his preaching. The conversion of St. Edwin did certainly involve a supernatural knowledge of past circumstances ; and the way in which St. Bede mentions the fame of the ruined walls of Lincoln Church, as gifted with a miraculous influence, would lead one to connect it with Paulinus.

But the time of his labors in the north was fast

drawing to a close. A rebellion, for so it is termed by Bede, broke out against St. Edwin, headed by Cadwalla, the savage king of the Britons, whose Christian profession seems only to have exasperated him the more against the Saxons, and Penda, a man of the Mercian blood royal, and an idolater. A battle took place at Heathfield, near the banks of the Don : it was fatal to St. Edwin, who was slain there, and extremely disastrous to the Church ; for it would appear as though it led to a complete persecution of the Northumbrian Christians. One would have imagined that Paulinus would have remained with his church, specially where there seemed so good a chance of winning the crown of martyrdom, for which the Saints in all ages were athirst. This, however, was not the case. Reverting to his first office of guardian of Ethelburga, he took ship under the escort of Bassus, one of St. Edwin's most valiant warriors, and sailed into Kent. We have not enough information left us to decide upon the grounds of his retiring from the persecution. We know from the position he afterwards held in Kent that he was fully justified in what he did, and that his contemporaries saw nothing in his conduct inconsistent with his sanctity ; and of course, as in the case of the patriarchs of the Old Testament, we should in every instance fear to pass a censure upon any one whom the veneration of catholics has canonized. The question of courting or shunning persecution was, we know, debated very early ; and undoubted Saints in quite primitive times adopted opposite lines of action. The example of our Blessed Lord would seem on the whole to favor the shunning of persecution : yet as the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness to be tempted, and as another time He set His face stedfastly to go up to Jerusalem, so doubtless the

inward illumination of His Spirit guides His Saints both when they advance and when they retire, as is so beautifully exemplified in the lives of St. Polycarp and St. Cyprian.

We must, therefore, follow Paulinus into Kent, not without casting a wistful and curious eye upon the deserted see of York, and the young Northumbrian church. History, however, is grudging of its materials : there is the good and holy James, the deacon of Paulinus, who was seen helping his bishop to baptize the multitudes in the Trent, he is still on the banks of the Swale by Catterick bridge, catechising and baptizing in spite of the persecution, "an ecclesiastical man and a holy, abiding long time in the church of York, and rescuing much prey from the old enemy." His is the only figure visible on the scene ; and yet a very interesting one ; for the good deacon was a sweet singer too, and he was permitted to see peace restored to his church ; and then, a delightful task ! he taught the Yorkshiremen to sing as they did at Rome and Canterbury, till at last he was very old ; and then he followed the way of his forefathers : and the labors and the sufferings and the good deeds of James, the deacon of Paulinus, are hidden with Christ in God.

Thus Paulinus, after his eight years in the north, is now in Kent again ; and we may be sure he was welcome to Honorius, whom he had consecrated himself at Lincoln ; and we may be sure, too, that he had done what was right and holy in leaving York, for it chanced that when he came into Kent the see of Rochester was vacant ; Romanus, the bishop, being drowned in the Mediterranean while on an embassy to Rome. St. Honorius therefore requested Paulinus, or rather, as Bede says, *invited* him, and king Eadbald

seconded the invitation, to take charge of the widowed church of Rochester ; for there was no controversy yet between the crosses of Canterbury and York : the ages of the Church when *crosses* struggled for precedence were yet to come, and bad as they were, compared with what had been, they were better a good deal than ages when crosses were put by altogether, because the world had settled all controversy between Canterbury and York by taking the precedence itself.

So Paulinus mounted the throne of Rochester ; and as before he had labored twenty-four years in Kent in silence and obscurity, so far as history can tell, he now labors in the same parts again for eleven years, edifying and consolidating the Kentish church, we know not how, till in 644 he passed to heaven, “with the fruit of his glorious labor,” and, like the prophet, bequeathed nothing but his mantle, the first pall of York, which he left to the church of Rochester.

He does not seem to have been always resident at Rochester ; perhaps he exercised episcopal superintendence in other parts, as a kind of spiritual vicar. For it appears that he lived for a considerable time at Glastonbury, where he caused the wattled walls of the old church to be taken down, and built up from the ground of solid timber, and covered with lead. Indeed Paulinus seems to have been a great church-builder, raising and adorning the material fabric no less than building up the edifice of holy souls. This wooden church of Glastonbury remained as Paulinus left it, till it was burned down in the reign of Henry the First.

He died on the 10th of October, and was buried in the sacristy of the blessed apostle St. Andrew at Rochester. And we read (Capgrave ap. Cressy) that, when Gundulph was bishop of Rochester, Lanfranc

took down the old church, and taking up the bones of St. Paulinus put them into a chest. There was present at this ceremony a woman grievously afflicted in body, and with her conscience burdened with a certain sin. At the sepulchre she vowed that, if by the merits of Paulinus God would free her from her disease, she would never again commit the sin of which she had been guilty ; whereupon she was immediately healed.

Do we seem to have but little to say of so famous a Saint, and he too the first archbishop of York, and the apostle of Northumberland? Do not let us think this : think what our island was in the first half of the seventh century : this good man left the quietness and the glory, the examples and the ceremonies of Rome, and labored forty and three years for us English : forty and three years, let us count them out, and dwell on them in love, for it was not little which he did, witness York and Lincoln and Southwell ; and though the Trent and the Swale and the Glen have flowed on and changed their waters many times, yet the souls regenerated in them are, in goodly sheaves we trust, laid up in the garner of the Lord. Therefore let us bless the memory of Paulinus, not only for the eight years' labor which we know of, but for the struggles and the toils of the silent thirty-five. Thus is it ever with the Saints : what we know of them is but a sample of what they were ; bunches of the grapes of Eschcol, brought out by the Holy Church for the wonder and veneration of her sons.

It is singular that such labors as those of Paulinus should have been so little illustrated by the working of miracles ; and it is disappointing that no traits should have been recorded of his personal character which might have brought him nearer to us, who cannot even see the cross which Camden saw at Dewsbury on the



Calder, with the brief but sufficient inscription, Paulinus hic prædicavit et celebravit. When we look back, all we see is what the old man saw who spoke with Deda abbot of Peartney, a Bishop at noonday on the banks of the Trent, very tall, with somewhat of a stoop, black hair, an emaciated face, a very thin and aquiline nose, with something both venerable and awe-inspiring in his aspect ; and that was St. Paulinus of York baptizing the Nottinghamshire men.



THE LIFE OF

St. Edwin,

KING OF NORTHUMBERLAND, A.D. 633.

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MOST beautiful is the diversity in the lives of the Saints. Some shine apart, like single stars discerned through the clouds of a troubled night, while others gather in manifold constellations, touching one upon another in a line of shapely splendor across the sky, both equally, though in different ways, illustrating our Lord's gracious promise that He would be with His Church to the end of time. And, if in writing the lives of single Saints it is hard to keep the biography from running into a general history of the age, so with a cluster of Saints, living with and acting upon each other, it is hard to make the account of one complete without forestalling and borrowing from another. Thus in the life of St. Paulinus we have already virtually included much of the life of Edwin, and in the life of Edwin we must in like manner almost complete the life of his holy consort St. Ethelburga.

There is, however, in Edwin a very strongly marked personal character, much beyond what is common in the lives of Saints of whose inward conflicts we know so little; and this will give an interest to the narrative of quite a different kind from that which engages our attention to the life of St. Paulinus. In the one case it

is the building up of an infant church, the beginnings of what was afterwards famous and magnificent : in the other it is the temper, the character, the actions, the changeful fortunes of the Saint himself.

Alla, the king of the Deiri, died in 589, leaving an infant son, three years old. This infant was St. Edwin, in whom was fulfilled the prophecy of St. Gregory that Alleluias should soon be sung in the kingdom of Alla. Of course it was not likely in those times that an infant should take quiet possession of his hereditary throne, if indeed the Saxon thrones of that day could be called hereditary at all. Ethelfrid, the cruel king of the Bernicians, usurped the throne of Alla, and constituted himself the guardian of the young child. Without assuming any unusually rigorous treatment on the part of Ethelfrid, it is obvious that the position which Edwin occupied in his court would be likely to try and bring out the powers of his character, and, being a school of suffering, to form him in virtue and fit him for great things. The child grew up, eminent for virtues and winning graces, and so gained upon the affections of all that as he grew to man's estate he became an object of fear and jealousy to Ethelfrid. Meanwhile he married Quenburga, the daughter of Ceorl the Mercian king. This possibly added to his influence, for soon after Ethelfrid upon some false charge or other banished Edwin from his court, notwithstanding that Ethelfrid's own queen was Acca, Edwin's sister, through which marriage the tyrant had probably wished to give some appearance of legitimate right to his usurpation.

Under whatever irksome restraints Edwin had lived in the court, his life now became one of great suffering, want, and danger, which the company of Quenburga and his solicitude for her safety would greatly enhance.

He lived in constant dread of assassination, and kept moving from place to place, disguised in a peasant's dress, until at length he threw himself upon the generosity of Redwald, the king of the East Angles, by whom he was hospitably and even royally entertained ; and it was probably in the court of Redwald that his sons Offrid and Edfrid were born, and that their mother Quenburga died. His conduct while at the East Anglian court was such as to spread his fame all over the island, and it is said that reading shared with martial exercises all his leisure hours : though kings' courts were not the common homes for students in the seventh century. Of course his growing renown would make him still more an object of jealous hatred to the usurper Ethelfrid, who employed spies and assassins to take him off. By some means or other Edwin baffled his persecutor, till Ethelfrid came to the resolution of sending a messenger to Redwald to buy his guest. Redwald rejecting the odious offer, Ethelfrid menaced him with war, and ultimately so won upon the fears of Redwald that he consented to betray a single stranger rather than bring his whole kingdom into trouble. By the change in Redwald's demeanor Edwin perceived that something was wrong, for persecution and living in the midst of enemies had greatly quickened his suspicions, and had bred in him a caution which is afterwards very perceptible in the matter of his conversion, yet wholly unaccompanied with coldness, as caution mostly is in base natures. Meanwhile a friend of Edwin's discovered the secret treaty made between Ethelfrid and Redwald ; and coming into his chamber just as he was retiring to bed, in the first hour of the night, he informed him of his danger, saying, "If you wish, I will this very hour take you out of the province, and lead you into places

where neither Ethelfrid nor Redwald shall be able to find you." But amid persecution Edwin had not learned distrust. He answered, "Truly I am obliged to you for your good intentions ; but I cannot do what you suggest, and be the first to break the covenant which I have entered into with so great a king, seeing he has done me no ill yet, nor shown me any unfriendliness. Rather, if I must die, let him, sooner than a more ignoble person, deliver me to death. And indeed whither shall I fly, when for so many years I have gone as a vagabond through every province of Britain to evade the snares of my enemies?"

When his friend had left him, Edwin went forth and sat down sorrowful before the palace, perplexed with opposite thoughts, and at a loss what to do or which way to turn. He was probably by this time a widower, and that bereavement may have added to the natural pensiveness and hesitation which belonged to his character, and so long delayed his acceptance of the Gospel. It is scarcely possible we should not hear of his queen afterwards, if she had not died before this ; and indeed, in his answer to his friend, mingling with a noble trust and a resolution to abide honorably by his promise, we may discover something of a broken spirit. Now, putting aside the Gospel, it is plain that in the world's acceptance of the term Edwin was no common man. Cradled in adversity, tried by the hourly irksomeness and petty rigors and disquieting restraints of Ethelfrid's court, proved yet more fiercely by the hardships of wandering and poverty, quietly dedicating his time to study, rather than either seeking his throne through busy schemes and plottings or burying his griefs in merriment and dissipation when harbored in the court of Redwald, and, when the dark cloud came

over him, keeping his honor, giving way to sadness rather than anger, a sadness too, as his whole life testifies, no way akin to cowardice, the Northumbrian prince shone forth with virtues almost above a heathen. There had been to him a sanctification in suffering, even before he found the Cross ; and suffering, because it had not wrought in him selfishness and meanness and a low cunning, had wrought nobleness and tenderness and a trust in others.

The use he had made of God's dispensations, like the alms and prayers of the unregenerate Cornelius, earned him a further grace, though the great grace was still deferred. While he sat, in anguish of mind and with a half unsettled purpose, before the palace of Redwald in the dark night, God looked down upon His creature whom he had ordained as a chosen instrument through whom to give the Cross to the Englishmen of the north. Suddenly there was a silence in the night, or something in the silence of an unwonted sort, which riveted his attention, and through the darkness he saw a person approach him, whom he knew not, and whose appearance for some reason or other, perhaps the instinctive knowledge and feeling of an unearthly presence, alarmed him not a little. The stranger drew near, and saluting him, asked him wherefore he sat wakeful upon the stone at an hour when others were in deep sleep. Edwin with the abruptness of a startled person said it was nothing to him, whether he chose to pass the night in the palace or out of doors. The stranger answered : " Think not that I am ignorant of the cause of thy sadness and watching, and thy sitting here alone and out of doors. I know most surely who thou art, and wherefore thou grieveest, and what ills thou fearest are nigh falling upon thee. But tell me, what reward

wouldst thou give the man, if one there be, who shouldst free thee from these anxieties, and persuade Redwald neither to injure thee himself, nor deliver thee to thine enemies to be slain." Edwin replied that he would give all that he possessed to any one who should confer such a benefit upon him; whereupon the stranger said, "And what if he promise thee of a surety that thou shalt be a king, and overcome thine enemies, so that thou shalt excel in power not only all thine own ancestors, but even all those who have ever been kings in England?" Edwin, recovering his self-possession during these interrogations, promised without hesitation to reward most worthily any one who should confer such benefits upon him. Then the stranger for the third time said, "If however he, who foretelleth thee such and so great goods as really about to come, can likewise counsel thee better and more wisely about thy life and salvation than any of thine ancestors or relations ever heard, wilt thou consent to obey him, and to follow his salutary admonitions?" Again Edwin unhesitatingly promised that he would follow in all things the teaching of the person who should from his present low estate raise him to a throne. When the prince had thus answered, the stranger laid his right hand on his head, saying, "When this sign shall be given unto thee, remember this hour and this discourse, and delay not to fulfil what thou hast now promised." Having uttered these words the stranger, whether it were an Angel of the Most High, or the spirit of a just man sent on that gracious embassy, disappeared so immediately as to convince the prince that he had held converse with some spiritual being.

Meanwhile God was making use of human instruments to bring about what his messenger had foretold.



Redwald had communicated to his queen the secret agreement which he had made with Ethelfrid ; but she, equally anxious for the honor of her royal husband and the safety of her guest, persuaded the king to abandon a design so unworthy of himself. Edwin was still sitting pensive and doubting, before the palace, when the same friend, who had warned him at night-fall, found him and gave him the welcome information of the change wrought in Redwald's purpose through the intercession of the queen. Ethelfrid, enraged at the failure of his design, fulfilled his threat, and made war on Redwald, who indeed had sent a personal defiance to Ethelfrid, as soon as he had abandoned his first dishonorable intention : so short is the passage between a sinful purpose half formed, and what a man fancies is righteous indignation against his tempter ! In this contest Edwin was no mean ally, for his prowess in riding and throwing the lance are specially mentioned among the causes of Ethelfrid's first jealousy against him. Redwald, scarcely giving the usurper time to muster his forces, gave him battle on the banks of the Idle in Nottinghamshire. Ethelfrid behaved with singular bravery, and with his own hand slew Rainer, the son of Redwald ; this loss so exasperated the king of the East Anglians that, redoubling his efforts, he became master of the field. Ethelfrid was slain on the spot, and Edwin recovered his throne ; while by the death of Rainer he likewise became heir to Redwald. Oswald and Ebba, the children of Ethelfrid, fled from the country, fearing the anger of their uncle Edwin, whose sister Acca was their mother. This battle is usually placed in the year 617, when Edwin was about thirty-one years old.

Edwin was not a likely person to forget the super-

natural vision, and the covenanted sign ; much was fulfilled already, but there was more to come, and with his pensive disposition he doubtless pondered it often in his heart. Meanwhile his career of conquest began, and his fame was spread all round. In 620 he recovered the south-western parts of Yorkshire and the country about Leeds from Cadwan the king of the Britons, who had taken it, together with most of the modern diocese of Ripon, from Ethelfrid. In 621 he took advantage of a quarrel between Ferquhard, the Pictish king, and his nobles, and gained a considerable accession of territory. In the next year he made himself master of the islands of Anglesey and Man. In 624 Redwald died, and the people, passing over his son Erpenwald, offered their crown to Edwin. Edwin seems to have behaved towards Erpenwald with a generosity not common in those times, but worthy of his own noble character. He made himself lord paramount of the East Anglian kingdom, but left to Erpenwald the insignia of royal power. And now he assumed the title of Sovereign of the English nation, which Ethelbert had borne before. Thus rapidly and completely were the words of the heavenly messenger accomplished. The exile at the palace door at dead of night in seven short years is, and not by empty title only, Sovereign of the English nation : “ for promotion cometh neither from the east nor from the west, nor yet from the south. And why ? God is the Judge ; He putteth down one, and setteth up another : ” and Edwin was a chosen vessel in His hands for the welfare of our dear country.

Edwin was now resting from his conquests ; and it seemed natural for a powerful monarch to wish to consolidate his kingdom, and to ally himself with another regal house. The resolution was natural, yet God was

working in it ; and through it the Divine purpose was secretly advancing towards its gracious end. In 625 it was that Edwin sent his ambassadors into Kent to demand of Eadbald his sister Ethelburga in marriage. The first repulse which Edwin met with neither angered nor discouraged him. He was not one to esteem a bride the less highly because she preferred the dictates of conscience to a splendid alliance, or the honor of her God to her own aggrandizement. As we have seen in the life of St. Paulinus, consent was ultimately given, and St. Paulinus himself came with the royal virgin to preserve and build up the queen and her Christian attendants in their most holy faith. This marriage took place in the eighth year of the reign of pope Boniface the fifth, and in that same year he wrote both to Edwin and St. Ethelburga. In his letter to the king he dwells upon the incomprehensibility of the Godhead, and holds up for Edwin's imitation the conversion of Eadbald his brother-in-law. He exhorts him to rid himself of idle and hurtful superstitions, but to take upon himself the sign of the Cross, and not to refuse to listen to the preachers of the Gospel ; and finally he presents him with a shirt with a single gold ornament upon it, and a garment of Ancyra, together with the blessing of the prince of the Apostles. This letter can hardly have failed to make a deep impression upon a mind so serious as Edwin's. The selfish, unzealous indifference of polytheism is notorious : the love of souls is a grace exclusively belonging to the Church of Christ. What then must Edwin have thought of the vast power of faith and the intense charity which such a phenomenon as the papacy presented to the eye of a heathen ? Rome had no interest in the matter. Here was no priesthood

to aggrandize, as men coarsely and stupidly speak, here were no revenues to be received, no secular claims to establish, no ambition to satisfy. On the very face of it Christianity came to the heathen as something so different from the manifold forms of false religion round them, as to arrest attention and engage enquiry; and it was the mysterious interest which the Roman bishop took in their conversion which was the most outward and striking characteristic of the new religion. It perplexed them; and their perplexity led them on; and this would not be lost upon one like Edwin.

Still he delayed. There was none of that greedy credulity, of that facile acquiescence, of mental weakness overawed by the tremendous doctrines of the Gospel, of an unreasoning appetite for prodigies, which people now-a-days believe made up the characters of the old Saints. On the contrary there is something quite striking, indeed one might almost say unaccountable, in the long hesitation of Edwin, and in the intellectual way (to use a modern word) in which he set about his enquiry. There is nothing on the face of the history which adequately explains it; for his whole life goes against the supposition of anything like a cold temperament or a distrusting heart. Rather one may conjecture the cause to have been this: that he was a very pious heathen, a religious man as far as he knew and believed, one who had sought consolation in religious observances during his long troubles, and whose thoughts from the pressure of circumstances had been a good deal turned towards the invisible world. This would agree with all we know of him, and explain what is the most difficult point in his character. For to a man who first reads the history of Edwin's conversion there will mostly come a feeling of disappointment at

the protracted hesitation and apparent indifference which he exhibited. But if our conjecture be true that he had been what men call a bigoted, that is, a sincere religionist in his dark way, even the wretched observances of his false faith would, and rightly, have no small value in his sight ; and, as he did not hold them cheap, he would not lightly abandon them. Supposing this to be the case, it is obvious that the daily quiet example of his Christian consort, and the eminent virtues of St. Paulinus, would help on his conversion more than miracles or startling Providences. He was not ready for them yet : doubtless the preparation of his heart had been long going on before St. Paulinus gave him the sign of the heavenly vision.

The growth of Edwin's power had not been observed by his neighbours without envy and disquietude, which led in 626 to an atrocious attempt on his life, on the part of Quichelm the king of the West Saxons. He sent to Edwin a messenger of the name of Eumer, who found the king at Aldby on the Derwent, not far from York. While he pretended to be doing homage, the assassin suddenly drew a poisoned dagger from under his garment, and fell upon the king. Lilla, Edwin's favorite minister, threw himself between his master and Eumer, and the weapon passed through his body, making even a slight wound in Edwin's flesh ; and it was not until he had slain Forthhere, one of the king's soldiers, that the murderer was slain himself. This narrow escape was on Easter Sunday. It happened that St. Ethelburga was at that time pregnant and near to her delivery, and the shock bringing on the pains of travail<sup>1</sup> she was that night delivered of a daughter

<sup>1</sup> Such is the way in which Bede's narrative is usually taken ; both

named Eanfleda. Edwin, in the presence of St. Paulinus, returned thanks to his false gods for the queen's safe delivery; but the Saint boldly affirmed the blessing to have been an answer to some special prayers of his. The Bishop's life had been such as to clear him from any suspicion of craft or untruth, and his words made a deep impression on the king. It is said that Edwin took pleasure in his words, and promised that he would renounce his idols and serve Christ, if, as a sign, victory was accorded to him over the base Quichelm, and, as a present earnest, he delivered the infant princess to St. Paulinus to be consecrated to Christ. She, with twelve others of her family, was baptized on the following Whitsunday, to the joy of Paulinus and the great consolation of St. Ethelburga.

At Whitsuntide the king, being recovered of his wound, notwithstanding the poison in which the blade had been dipped, marched against the West Saxons, and by God's help utterly subdued his enemies. Yet not even then did he perform the promise which he had given to St. Paulinus.<sup>2</sup> A change of religion seemed a grave matter even to a conscientious heathen. He did not forget or neglect his promise, but he made Paulinus instruct him in the Christian faith on the one hand, while on the other he conferred with the wisest persons of his court on this momentous subject. The natural pensiveness of his disposition showed itself very

Alford and Cressy take it so, but Alban Butler makes the birth of the daughter to have been on Easter Eve, which suits Bede's word *pepererat* much better, and what he says afterwards of the easy delivery.

<sup>2</sup> The *quo tempore* of Bede would seem to imply that the letters of pope Boniface came during Edwin's suspense after his victory over Quichelm: but the victory was in 626, and that was the first year of the pontificate of Honorius.

strongly ; for not content to be instructed and to hold conferences, he withdrew a great deal from public, and sat by himself for long together in silent conflict. Perhaps what he had seen in the court of Redwald was a stumbling-block in his way, and had done an injury to the cause of Christ in Edwin's mind. For Redwald had himself received the sacrament of regeneration in Kent, but on his return to his own country was seduced from the faith, and in the darkness of his mind professed both the Gospel and idolatry at once, having a temple wherein was one altar to Christ, and a "*small*" one, a characteristic difference, whereon to sacrifice to devils. This would of course bring about a very wretched state of things among the East Saxons, and would be not unlikely to take from the majestic and imposing appearance of the Gospel in Edwin's mind, even when it was afterwards brought before him as it really is in itself. The heavenly vision, also, would doubtless be continually in his mind during these silent retirements and lonely meditations. The oracle had been amply fulfilled in all that was promised to temporal dignity and extended sway ; what was there in the circumstances about him which might be a fulfilling of the part which spoke of salvation ? What had come nigh him or gathered round him, apart from his increased dominions and magnificence ? A Christian queen, a handful of Kentish believers, an Italian bishop—what were these to the Northumbrian king ? What place had they in the designs of Heaven ? Were they connected with the vision ? Truly Edwin had need to sit alone and be silent : he was in the hand of God ; the shadow of the Cross fell upon his very hearth, and he was beginning to perceive it.

But now the hour of grace was come. Whether it

were that some prayer of perplexity was that moment offered up, we know not : but while he sat alone, and pondered the new religion, the vision came and found him out. St. Paulinus entered, laid his right hand on his head, and guided by divine inspiration, asked him if he knew that sign. Edwin recognized the token ; he trembled like an aspen leaf, and would have fallen down at the bishop's feet. But the holy man raised him up, and with an encouraging manner addressed him thus ; " See, you have by God's assistance escaped the enemies whom you feared ; behold, you have through His bounty received the kingdom which you desired. Take heed that you delay not that third thing which you promised, namely, to embrace the faith and keep the commandments of Him who hath out of temporal distresses raised you to a temporal kingdom, and who will also free you from the perpetual torments of evil and make you partaker with Himself of His heavenly kingdom, provided only you henceforth conform yourself to His will, which I preach to you." Edwin replied that he was ready at once to submit to the faith of Christ, which the bishop taught.

But it seemed a small thing to him, after all his delay and these convincing proofs, to come emptyhanded, so to speak, to the holy sacrament. He would fain his friends and counsellors should share with him the grace of God and the benefits of the blessed laver. He proposed, therefore, to hold a conference with his nobles, and endeavor to persuade them to come with him to be cleansed in Christ, the fount of life. This famous conference took place at Godmundingham, not far from York. The nobles doubtless had many times been present at the preaching of St. Paulinus, for Edwin assumed that they knew something of the new religion



proposed to them. He began by asking them all round what each one thought of the unheard of doctrine and new worship of the Divinity which was proposed. The chief priest, Coifi, was the first who answered, "See, O king, what manner of thing this is which is now preached to us ; for I candidly profess that for what I see the religion we have held hitherto has neither power nor profit in it. None of your subjects has more studiously attended to the worship of the gods than myself, and yet there are many who receive greater gifts and higher dignities from you than I do, and succeed better in all matters where anything is to be achieved or gained. Now if the gods were worth anything, of course they would rather help me, who have served them so carefully. Wherefore if we find on examination the new things, which are preached to us, worthier and stronger, let us make as much haste as ever we can to receive them." It was an odd test which poor Coifi hit upon to try a religion, and his disappointed ambition comes to the surface with a very natural, if not dignified, candor. Yet after all, though it has seldom been related without a passing sneer, is the unhelpfulness of the idols set forth in so very different a way from what it is on more than one occasion in the Old Testament ?

Another of the king's chief counsellors, assenting to the words of Coifi, said, "O king, the present life of man on earth seems to me, in comparison of the unknown time, as though when you are sitting at supper with your generals and counsellors in the winter time, when the fire is kindled in the midst and the room made warm, while out of doors the wintry rain and snow are whirling about, and a sparrow comes and flies quickly through the hall, coming in at one door and escaping by another. For the moment during which it is within, it

is not touched by the winter storm, but the little space of quiet being run out in a moment, it glides back into the winter whence it came. So seems man's life for awhile, but what shall follow or what went before, we know nothing of. Wherefore if this new doctrine inform us any the more certainly about it, it seems worthy of being followed."

The council seems to have been quite unanimous : what Coifi had said would doubtless come home to some ; while the touching confession of ignorance, so beautifully made by the nameless speaker, would find the better natures, and be as it were a voice to what they had all along been feeling. Coifi however, as was natural in a priest, wished to hear St. Paulinus more at length, on the subject of the new faith. The holy bishop at the king's command having addressed the council, Coifi exclaimed, "I have long perceived that there was nothing in what we have been worshipping, because the more diligently I sought for truth in that worship, the less I found it. But now I openly declare that in this preaching shines forth that truth which is able to give us life, salvation, and eternal blessedness. Wherefore I propose, O king, that we immediately curse and burn the temples and altars which we have fruitlessly consecrated."

Thus ended the famous debate of Godmundingham ; and before the council broke up, Edwin gave St. Paulinus liberty to preach the Gospel, and openly renouncing idolatry, he proclaimed his own submission to the faith of Christ. Then arose the question, who was to desecrate the enclosures of the idol temples ? the ardent Coifi offered himself for that service, "for," said he, "who is fitter than myself to give that example to all, and to destroy through the wisdom that God hath given me

those things which I worshipped in my folly?" So saying, he requested of the king arms and a stallion, thereby to show more signally his contempt for his former superstitions, which forbade a priest to carry arms, and allowed him to ride on a mare only. Then he went forth with his lance in rest, and rode to the idol temple. The people, seeing his strange unpriestly guise, believed he was gone mad; but when he approached the temple he threw his spear into it, and, "much rejoicing in the acknowledgment of the true God," he gave orders to his companions to burn the temple with all its enclosures. And thus fell the false gods of the Yorkshiremen, to rise again, yet only for a little while.

The facility with which in this and some other cases a large body of people renounced their ancient religion has sometimes provoked a sneer. Yet surely most unreasonably. To deem the persons so converted insincere or indifferent is to underrate the divine character of the Gospel, and to disbelieve the promise which Christ made of being ever with His Church: that a sudden inspiration should light upon a multitude of men is of course in one sense miraculous; but does not the Gospel lead us to look for miracles in the conversion of the heathen? and, when we call such a thing miraculous, do we mean anything further than that it is a more palpable display of God's power than the equally supernatural work of convincing the intellect and preparing the heart of an individual? It does not follow that Edwin's conversion was the only sincere one, because in his case only we know something of the protracted processes through which he was brought to the knowledge of the truth and the acceptance of it. The nameless speaker at the conference would probably imbibe the faith more readily than Edwin, from his imaginative turn of mind and the

melancholy tenderness so visible in his speech. Neither must we forget, what history of course can take no cognizance of, the daily operation of the preaching of Paulinus, the example of Ethelburga, the converse of her Christian attendants, the sight of Christian ceremonial, the presence of Christian emblems. The fact that, as Bede says, the nobles universally submitted to the faith, and also a great many of the people, may perhaps intimate that the movement began, just where all these things were more specially present,—in the court, and how long it may have been going on even before the conference of Godmundingham of course we cannot tell.

Notwithstanding Edwin's many conferences with St. Paulinus, he required a yet more perfect instruction in the mysteries of the faith, before he was fit to receive the sacrament of regeneration. During this interval he had a wooden church or oratory erected at York, which was to be the chief city of the bishopric. It was on Easter Sunday, which in 627 fell on the 12th of April, that Edwin was baptized in the wooden church dedicated to St. Peter ; and either then, or shortly afterwards, his sons Offrid and Eadfrid, which Quenburga bore him in his banishment, were also received into the Christian Church, and Iffi, the son of Offrid. His sons Ethelhun and Wuscfrea, and his daughter Etheldrith, the children of St. Ethelburga, were all afterwards baptized ; but Ethelhun and Etheldrith, says Bede, were taken out of this life in their baptismal white, and buried in the church at York. A large and noble church of stone now began to rise over the wooden oratory ; six years was Edwin building it, yet when he died the wall had not reached its proper height, and the completion of it was reserved for his great successor St. Oswald. The success which the Gospel had in Northumberland, the

labors of St. Paulinus in Yorkshire, the conversion of Lincolnshire, and the building of Southwell in Nottinghamshire, are the chief events of the next six years, and belong rather to the life of the bishop than of the king. Edwin seems to have had a taste for magnificence ; for not only in war, but also in peace, his banners were borne before him, and even when he walked the streets the ensign, called by the Romans Tufa, was borne before him. There was probably as much wise policy as personal love of dignity, in general so distasteful to the Saints, in this practice. Indeed he seems to have been a most able king, and the account of the state of his dominions is very unlike our usual notion of the northern counties of England in the seventh century. It was said proverbially that a woman with her new-born child might traverse the island from sea to sea, and no one hurt her. Whenever he perceived a clear spring near the highway, such was his paternal solicitude for the good of his people that he had stakes driven into the ground, and brazen saucers hung upon them, that they who travelled by might slake their thirst,—a beautiful instance of his characteristic thoughtfulness ! And such was the mingled dread and affection which he inspired that no one dared to injure or remove the vessels.

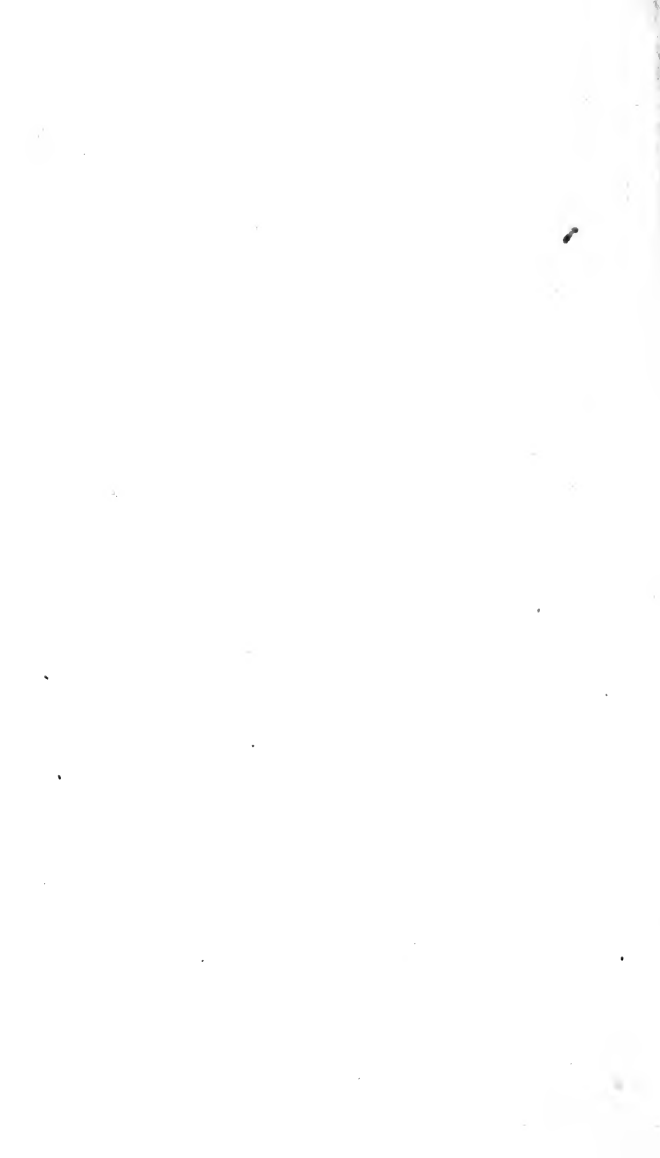
In 632 the holy father Honorius, who at that time ruled the Apostolic See, sent a letter of exhortation to Edwin, in which he greatly praises his orthodoxy and the inflamed fire of his faith, and warns him to persevere to the end in order that he may reach the blessed mansions of the world to come, and then says, “Be oft-times occupied in the reading of your preacher, my lord Gregory, of apostolical memory, and keep before your eyes the zealousness of his doctrine, which he willingly

employed for your souls, so that his prayers may augment your realm and people, and present you unblameable before Almighty God." The pope at the same time sent palls to Honorius of Canterbury, and Paulinus.

The life and reign of Edwin now drew to a close. In 633 a rebellion broke out against him, the chiefs of which were Cadwalla the British king, and Penda one of the Mercian blood royal. A battle took place at Heathfield on the Don, on the 12th of October. The contest was severe : Offrid, the gallant son of Edwin, making a fierce charge upon the enemy was killed ; and the king himself was shortly afterwards slain by the hand of the heathen Penda, whence he has been honored with the title of Martyr. He died in the 47th year of his age, and the 17th year of his reign. After the admonition of pope Honorius it is interesting to read that the head of Edwin was brought to York, and was buried in the porch of the new church, named, in affectionate honor of the great pontiff, the porch of St. Gregory.

The life of St. Edwin does not seem like a story of the seventh century. But if it is devoid of the interest borrowed from the signs and wonders which in so many cases it pleased the Head of the Church to work by the hands of His Saints, it has a special edification of its own for our times. To our narrow view it appears as though the age of miracle and prodigy and strange interventions and unearthly judgments was of necessity destitute of scrutiny, firmness, delay, intellectual hesitation and the conscientious exercise of humble judgment. Now it is only necessary to put St. Edwin's life by the side of St. Oswald's to see how false this is. Both were eminent Saints ; the lives of both are for

the most part drawn from the same sources ; yet one seems to move along a track of miracles, the other to exhibit the gradual submission of a powerful intellect to the faith of Christ. In a word there is, in appearance, something *modern* about St. Edwin's life, such as may to a certain class of minds suggest thoughts which it were well they should improve upon.





THE LIFE OF

**St. Ethelburga,**

QUEEN, A.D. 633.

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WITH what tenderness does Holy Church console the faithful by retrieving the good from out the disheartening multitude of evil, and in holyday and liturgy exposing it, as though it were some precious relic, to the veneration of catholics in the lives of the Saints ! We learn to reverence the memory of the holy bishop who founded the Northumbrian church ; we follow him amid his labors, from the Swale to the Glen, from York to Lincoln, from Lincoln to Nottingham. He did his part of the work ; but neither do we forget the great and strong-minded Edwin ; he was a king ; he had his work to do, and he did it in a kingly way. One would think the mitred clerk and the crowned layman were enough to keep alive in our minds the great mercy of God in planting the Cross in the North of England. But no ! the eye of the Church finds out the gentle queen, the saintly Ethelburga, passing her silent years in the court of a heathen husband. Had not she too her work to do ? and did she not do it ? and had she not a very noble heart ? So she too is given us to venerate ; though we know but little of her, that little is enough to give us wholesome thoughts ; and though her meek life is told in her husband's life, yet there is enough about her to let her shine like a star

apart, a star not to be overlooked, because an essential feature in the holy groupe of Edwin and Paulinus, Oswald, Aidan and Oswin, and the rest who in that century worked the work of God in the dark North.

The Church, who every vespers recites the Magnificat of our blessed Lady, could not overlook the holy women, the ascetic virgins, the pure wives, the saintly mothers, who, like Mary, have in one sense conceived the Lord, and brought Him forth anew to His Church in every age. The Gospel came into Kent through a woman: it came into Yorkshire through a woman too; and as by a blessed woman the world received the Saviour, so has it been said that nothing great has been done in the Church, but what a woman has had part therein. "For first many of them descended into the amphitheatres with the martyrs; others disputed with the anchorets the possession of the desert. Presently Constantine unfolded the Labarum on the Capitol, while St. Helena raised the Cross on the walls of Jerusalem. Clovis at Tolbiac invoked the god of Cloilda; the tears of Monica redeemed the errors of Augustine. Jerome dedicated the Vulgate to the piety of two Roman ladies, Paula and Eustochium. St. Basil and St. Benedict, the first legislators of the monastic life, were succoured by Macrina and Scholastica their sisters. Later on, the Countess Matilda sustained with her chaste hands the tottering throne of Gregory the seventh. The wisdom of queen Blanche administered the realm of St. Louis: Joan of Arc saved France; Isabella of Castille presided over the discovery of the New World. To come nearer still to our own times, one sees St. Theresa mingling with a groupe of bishops, doctors and founders of Orders to work a thorough reformation of catholic society. St. Francis of Sales

cultivated the soul of Madame de Chantal as a chosen flower, and St. Vincent of Paul confided to Louisa de Marillac that most admirable of his designs, the establishment of the Sisters of Charity.”<sup>1</sup> And amid this galaxy we may dare to place our English Ethelburga.

St. Ethelburga was the daughter of king Ethelbert, of blessed memory, and of his queen Bertha. Her life was as it were her mother's life over again. Bertha, with her bishop Luidhard, consented to yoke herself with a heathen husband for the Lord's sake and the amplifying of His Church: her daughter Ethelburga, with the bishop Paulinus, did for York what her mother had done for Canterbury. What a sweet picture it is, a Christian virgin led like a lamb to a lot from which her own heart shrunk, but with a shepherd by her side, a Christian bishop, to keep her from the wolves! What a contrast to the rudeness and the wassail and the strife of a heathen court! Fair as the moon, yet for the inward might of truth terrible as an army with banners, and each of the two finally enslaving the kingdoms whither they were led! We know nothing of the early years of Ethelburga. There can be little doubt but that she was most tenderly guarded by her mother, and most carefully instructed by St. Luidhard. The obstinate refusal of her brother Eadbald to submit to the faith would render her still more precious in the eyes of Bertha, and she doubtless grew up in secret holiness. How she passed the interval between Eadbald's accession and his conversion we do not know; but here also there can be but little doubt that the eye of St. Laurence would watch over

<sup>1</sup> Ozanam. *Philos. Cath.* du xiii. siècle, ap. Ratisbonne. *Vie de S. Bernard*, i. xxxv.

the princess with the vigilance of a father and the affection of a mother, while the idolatry and incest of her brother daily vexed her righteous soul. Her girlhood, therefore, was hardly spent in peace. She witnessed scenes which must have aided materially in forming her character and establishing her faith : and we are not taken by surprise either at the first indignant impulse with which she rejected the hand of Edwin, nor at her unhesitating compliance when it came before her in the light of a sacrifice for the love of God. A fearful sacrifice indeed, for what honor, peace, comfort, could there be for the Kentish virgin in the court of the heathen north ! What consolation in the prospect of a mother's office, or what certainty of ultimately doing good, when her husband was such an one as the strong warrior, the proud conqueror, the pomp-loving king !

But she made the sacrifice ; she went forth ; Paulinus was her Luidhard ; and York became as Canterbury, a conquest of the faith. Yet think of her position as a queen before her husband's conversion : what numberless positions of a distressing kind would she be placed in almost daily, from the mere force of circumstances ! What temptations to act one way for peace sake, when truth led her the other ! What perplexing questions of compliance or non-compliance ! What a puzzle to draw the line between singularity and concession ! And a *woman* to be placed in such a position ! Yet by her unaffectedness and boldness, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, God's Providence overshadowing her in the person and presence of St. Paulinus, she came forth triumphant. Her life is rather to be imagined than told : her feelings at the attempted assassination of St. Edwin,

at the baptism of Eanfleda, at the conversion of the king, may readily be conceived. And then those six years of royal progresses, of river-sides thronged with candidates for baptism, of good Paulinus preaching and converting up and down, of the fair minster of York rising higher and higher, a Christian queen the ornament of a Christian court, a Christian mother with her children Christians also, what happiness was hers ; happiness earned by humble efforts, and enjoyed with like humility : three canonized Saints meeting in almost daily converse, a king, a bishop, and a queen, unconscious as the Saints ever are of their own high endowments, and who would have been stricken to the ground at the thought of being hereafter venerated by the catholics of all times and lands,—what a picture it is, a page of the seventh century !

Those six years were not a dream. Yet they were but a transient reality. They came in the middle of her life like a bright noon between two storms ; yet doubtless they developed many graces which had been sown during adverse times and difficult trials. However, sunshine seldom lasts long with Saints ; the Gospel is a religion of suffering, for this plain reason, that to suffer is to be Christlike. Edwin was slain ; the wild beasts were loose in the Northumbrian church ; and her shepherd Paulinus withdrew her from their fangs. History has preserved the name of Edwin's favorite captain, the loyal Bassus, beneath whose escort the bishop and the queen took ship, and coasted England till they came to Kent. Her welcome from Ead-bald would doubtless be all which a sister would require. But Ethelburga had done with courts ; she had entered one only for the love of God and in conformity to His will ; and when she now dedicated her-

self to the monastic state, was she not probably doing nothing more than reverting to the wishes of her younger days, fulfilling in Kent in her widowhood what she had perhaps thought of in Kent in her virginity? Her children disposed of, she built a monastery at Liming with Eadbald's consent and assistance, and gave herself up to holy poverty. She is said to have been the first Saxon widow who took the veil, and in the Martyrology is called the Mother of many virgins and widows. She put on her earthly crown for the love of Christ, she wore it for His Church, she put it off for the greater love she bore Him, and she now reigns with Him in heaven. May her merits and intercession avail with Him for those fair districts of the North among which she went as an obedient Angel to plant the blessed Rood!

## THE LIFE OF

# St. Oswald,

KING AND MARTYR, A.D. 642.

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ST. EDWIN and St. Oswald were uncle and nephew by blood ; they were in their political relations what the world calls enemies ; and they were both saints in the Catholic Church. For the Church knows nothing of time or place or temporary relations, but gathers up all that was holy and self-denying and Christlike in the past, and solemnly enshrines it for the comfort and support of her children in all ages. We may now pursue the history of the Northumbrian Church in the life of St. Oswald.

It will be remembered that when king Ethelfrid was slain, and St. Edwin gained possession of his throne in 617, Ethelfrid's three sons, Eanfrid, Oswald and Oswy, fled into Scotland, which was to be to them what the court of their father had been to St. Edwin, a school of adversity, training them to fill high places. In Scotland they learned the Christian faith, and received the sacrament of regeneration. From Oswald's subsequent intercourse with the Scotch we may gather that the youthful princes found a kind and hospitable refuge there, and that the time of their banishment was not on the whole a period of suffering and hardship. St. Bede speaks as though Oswald had been personally popular with his hosts. On the death of St. Edwin

the three princes naturally returned home, as Edwin's queen and youthful children had retired into the south. Osric, the cousin of St. Edwin, and a convert of St. Paulinus, succeeded to the kingdom of the Deiri, and Eanfrid, the eldest son of Ethelfrid, to the throne of Bernicia. Both kings, deprived of the safeguard of adversity, fell away from the faith, and returned to the licentious abominations of idolatry. Meanwhile the Northumbrian Church and kingdom were being laid waste by the fierce and brutal Cadwalla, who slew Osric the summer after his accession, being made the instrument of Heaven to punish that unhappy king's apostasy. Soon after, Eanfrid, going to Cadwalla with only twelve soldiers in order to sue for peace, was also cruelly put to death ; and Oswald became the rightful monarch of the Northumbrians.

Nothing could appear to human eyes less hopeful than the infant Church of Paulinus after the death of St. Edwin : the holy archbishop himself gone on other duties : the kingdom divided, and that between two apostates : and the country occupied by the ruthless invader Cadwalla. The light of the Gospel seemed wellnigh extinct. Such a terrible impression did that year leave upon people's minds that it was called the accursed year ; and historians, with a common consent as touching as it is significant, shrunk from reckoning it as the reign of Osric and Eanfrid, but added it as a ninth year to the eight of St. Oswald. But it is mostly when a branch of His Church is shorn of human powers, like Gideon's army, that God is pleased to intervene, in order that men may acknowledge, what they are ever forgetting, that the Church is a divine institution and that all our strength and all our gifts are from above. He had taken St. Edwin to Himself : St. Paulinus was



removed, absent in body though doubtless powerfully present in spirit, and the intercessions of the dead and the living were heard in behalf of the Church those two saints had planted. St. Oswald was raised to carry on the work which St. Edwin had begun, and to carry it on in a manner so different as to lead us to muse on the Divine government of the Church. Considering that it was the foundation of a new Church among a people of strong feelings, fierce prejudices and rugged ways, it is, to say the least, very striking that there should have been such a comparatively small display of miraculous powers. The calm, dubious, searching, contemplative, intellectual spirit which reigns through the lives of Saints Edwin and Paulinus, and comes uppermost in the famous conference held by the king, is certainly not what we usually find to prevail during the beginnings of the faith amid a barbarous nation. It gives a very special and marked character to the rise of the Northumbrian Church. But when we pass from the days of Edwin to those of Oswald, we enter quite a different atmosphere. The Church lived on through the lonely ministrations of James the deacon, whose spirit was possibly cheered by some such supernatural assurance as Elijah received of the many among the people who had not bowed the knee to Baal. And with the accession of Oswald the mighty Hand and stretched out Arm come forth visibly in behalf of the Church. Miracles and visions abound. The personal character of the king seems almost lost in the display of supernatural interference. The wide possessions and extended power of St. Edwin, won by active sagacity and assiduous enterprise, are regained by the austere, ascetic Oswald.

Seventeen years prince Oswald spent in banishment

among the Scots; and it was probably in 635 that his brother Eanfrid was murdered. The apostasy and punishment of Osric and Eanfrid would of course make a deep impression on the pious mind of Oswald; and the quiet confidence of faith with which he appears to have acted might lead one to suppose that he looked upon the recent disasters as rising rather from his brother's sin than from Cadwalla's power, and that he feared God's anger more than the invader's overwhelming force. Immediately on Eanfrid's death he collected what few forces he could, and encamped against Cadwalla near the brook called Denisburn, at no great distance from the Roman wall. His "little flock of kids," like Israel before the army of Benhadad, were in no wise dismayed: their leader, says William of Malmesbury, was armed with faith rather than weapons: justice and the blessing of God were his allies. He had learned his faith amid the zealous and devout Scots, and the celestial guardians of that people were now permitted to succour and console him. The evening before the battle, and close to Cadwalla's camp, Oswald caused a rude Cross of wood to be reared, and with his own hands held it up while the cavity was filled in with earth. No sooner did it stand erect than the king cried out to the army with a loud voice, "Let us all bend our knees, and pray unto the Lord, omnipotent, living and true, to defend us by His pitifulness from our proud and fierce enemy; for He Himself knoweth that our war is a just war for the safety of our nation." When the king's devotions were finished he retired to his tent; and during the night slept peacefully, as being in the hands of God and beneath the custody of good Angels. As he slept St. Columba appeared to him, and assured him, not only of victory on the morrow, but also

of a happy reign. This vision Oswald himself related to Failbey, abbot of Iona, who told it to St. Adamnan his successor ; and it is by him inserted in his life of St. Columba.<sup>1</sup> At break of day the battle took place, when Oswald obtained a complete victory, and the Cumbrian tyrant was left dead on the field. The name of the place where the battle was fought was Hevenfeld, or Heaven's Field, a name which, as St. Bede says, was a sort of prophecy that in times to come the sign of our redemption should be set up there. The exact site is not known, but it appears to have been only a few miles from Hexham.

This, like St. Edwin's battle on the river Idle, was a new beginning for the Northumbrian Church ; only that as Oswald's life was full of wonders, so his reign commenced with the setting up of this famous and wonderworking Cross at Hevenfeld. So many and great were the miracles wrought both at the place and by fragments of the Cross, that in Bede's time it was common to cut off small chips of the wood and soak them in water, and men or cattle diseased were healed either by drinking of the water or being sprinkled with it. The monks of Hexham were wont to repair thither on the eve of St. Oswald's martyrdom, to keep the vigil there for the health of his soul, to sing psalms, and say mass for him in the morning. This ritual would of course assume a different form in proportion as the Church, by miracles wrought by God at St. Oswald's intercession or through means of his relics, came to ascertain that he was admitted into the noble army of martyrs. One of the miracles wrought by St. Oswald's Cross took place in Bede's own days. One of the

<sup>1</sup> Chaloner, ii. 67. Brit. Sanct.

monks of Hexham, whose name was Bothelm, walking incautiously on some ice during the night, fell and broke his arm. The fracture was such as to cause the most excruciating pain ; and hearing that one of the brethren was going to Hevenfeld, he asked him to bring him a piece of the venerable wood, saying, that he had faith that God would heal him by means of it. In the evening the monk returned ; the patient seems to have been in the refectory with the rest, and the monk gave him some old moss which he had scraped from the surface of the wood, which seems to imply a carefulness lest the Cross should be consumed by the frequent cutting of chips from it. Bothelm at the time put the moss into his bosom, and for some cause or other omitted to take it out when he lay down to sleep. But in the middle of the night he awoke, feeling something cold touching his side ; and reaching out his hand to ascertain what it was, he found his arm restored whole as if it had never been broken.

Oswald was now in full possession of the Northumbrian kingdom ; and his first care was to provide for the Church. The first foundation of it had been in the southern province at York, and that by a Roman missionary : the second foundation was in the northern province, and by Scotch missionaries opposed to the Roman rites and customs. On looking round him Oswald found indeed a Church, but without a ruler. We might have supposed it would have been most natural for him to have recalled St. Paulinus : but either there were political objections to that, as the archbishop was the guardian of St. Edwin's children, or Oswald himself might be prejudiced in favor of the Scottish usages. Anyhow he betook himself to the Scotch Church for missionaries. This might have been a

serious thing for the future welfare of the whole Saxon Church ; and it is never to be forgotten that the averting of schism and the restoration of uniformity by submission, as was most natural, to the Roman customs, were among the obligations we are under to St. Wilfrid, aided surely in no small degree by the dying injunctions of the great St. Cuthbert, himself a Scot, and brought up in Scottish usages.

There appears to have been, even at that time, the same national character in the Scotch Church, the same mixture of zeal and obstinacy, of austerity and harshness, which distinguished it in after days, and which came out so fearfully in the great struggle, when almost the entire nation threw off the yoke of Christ. The whole conduct of the dispute about Easter and the tonsure was strongly marked with the Scotch characteristics. A backwardness to adapt itself to circumstances, something like fierceness, an inclination to sectarianism, were from time to time apparent, compensated by a devout adherence to old traditions, a hatred of change, a steadfast orthodoxy, a very high standard of holiness, a severe asceticism. No two tempers could be more opposed than those of the Churches of Rome and Scotland at the time of which we are now writing, and there can be little doubt which was the higher and more catholic of the two. Yet Bede himself, who was very far from under-rating the differences, bears testimony to the noble and self-denying character of the Scotch missionaries, and the extreme devotion of their lives.

It was to this Church of Scotland, his own mother in the faith, that Oswald now turned ; and from which came forth a company of saints, whose names are still held in deserved esteem, reverence, and love among the inhabitants of the northern shires of England. To the

old Scotch Church England owes Lindisfarne, and therefore all the catholic glories of the palatinate of Durham.

Oswald's first request for a missionary was answered by the sending of Corman. His mission entirely failed, and he himself retreated into Scotland. It does not exactly appear what the cause of his failure was. Some attribute it to his ignorance of the Saxon language ; but from his own complaint it would rather seem that he had endeavoured to introduce all at once a severe discipline which the untutored minds and rough natures of the Saxons could not endure. He seems to have been deficient in winningness ; and to have been unequal to the task of so blending suavity with strictness as not to introduce laxity. He comes out quite as the representative of the less pleasing characteristics of the old Scotch Church. There is nothing which the world has so doggedly continued to misunderstand as the conduct of missionaries among barbarians and misbelievers. It is ever demanding in their conduct towards their converts a strictness which it calls gloom and bigotry when brought near to itself ; and unable to comprehend the pliancy there is in Christian wisdom, and what a depth there is in the very simplicity of its policy, men cry out against what they call lax accommodations and a betraying of the truth. Yet it is not a little significant that the very persons who have been mostly accused of this have been in their treatment of themselves most selfdenying and austere. A strict discipline is not the remedy for a long chronic disorder of laxity and remissness. It amounts to an excommunication ; and destroys souls by repelling them from the very shadow of the influence under which its object is to bring them. Of course it is a difficult thing to raise the standard of

holiness in a Church, a see, a parish or a monastery, without somewhat terrifying the minds of men ; yet it is possible, and it is needful, to find the means of doing so without the sudden introduction of such a severe and ascetic discipline as one hopes to come to at the last. The lives of half the Saints on record were spent in the successful solution of this problem : missionaries among the heathen, Bishops in sees wasted with simony, priests in parishes lost in ignorant superstitions, abbots in dissolute monasteries. And it may be that this is the very problem which is to be somehow or other solved in our own days among us descendants of those very Saxons whom the zeal of Corman failed to convert, but whom the gentle rigors of St. Aidan built up as living stones into a very great and glorious Church. The tender but pure system of discipline introduced into Italy by St. Alfonso toward the conclusion of the last century,<sup>2</sup> though it met with clamor and opposition from the rigid party, has probably been one main cause of the singular revival of spirituality in that part of the Church.

On the return of Corman a synod was held in which he stated the impossibility of converting the Saxons. This was a serious matter to the synod, who were extremely desirous to grant Oswald's request and to spread the light of the truth among their neighbours. Among the members of the council was the monk Aidan, who addressed Corman in these words. " My brother, it seems to me that you were harsher than is right with untaught hearers, and did not according to apostolic discipline hold forth first the milk of gentler doctrine, until nourished by degrees with the word of God they

<sup>2</sup> His *Theologia Moralis* was first published in 1753.

should be capable of imbibing more perfect precepts and attaining loftier practice." No sooner had he said this than the council cried out that Aidan ought to be made a bishop and sent to teach the unbelievers, in that God had filled him specially with the grace of discretion, which is the mother of the virtues. And so Oswald was provided with another St. Paulinus in the person of St. Aidan, whose successors included York within their see for thirty years, while that famous city remained without its pall for 135 years after Paulinus had gone to Rochester.

St. Aidan appears to have been left to fix his see where he pleased ; and he chose the island of Lindisfarne, which was at no great distance from Bamborough, Oswald's royal city. The eight years of Oswald's reign were almost entirely taken up with the holy and happy duty of assisting his bishop. Churches were built in many places : public schools established : monasteries founded, and among them the famous abbey of Hexham, and the regular monastic discipline of the Scots introduced into them. Daily, says the venerable Bede, did holy Scotchmen pass the borders preaching the Gospel all over Northumbria, and baptizing their converts. Very beautiful it was to see the humility of the good king. St. Aidan not being able to speak with fluency in English, Oswald interpreted his sermons to his generals and ministers, having learned the Scotch language thoroughly during his years of exile. Indeed Oswald seems to have taken no delight in the splendors of royalty ; but, foregoing the state in which St. Edwin lived, he appears before us more like a bishop than a king in all but the peculiar functions of that sacred office. Even when his earthly kingdom was larger than that of his predecessors, he was humble and



attentive to pilgrims and the poor, and a great almsgiver. His conquests do not appear to have cost him long or bloody wars, or to have been acquired by worldly subtilty, but rather to have fallen upon him by way of natural consequence, as an adding of all other things to one who so eminently followed first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. That he was not a person of what historians call weak piety and womanish superstitions is plain from his effecting that great work which even St. Edwin had failed to bring about, and which is specially referred to St. Oswald, namely, the moulding the two adverse bodies of his population, the Deiri and the Bernicians, into one united, happy and peaceful people.

Although St. Aidan had fixed his see at Lindisfarne, and Oswald his capital at Bamborough, the king was not unmindful of the city of York. He completed the church of St. Peter there, which St. Edwin had begun to build over the wooden oratory of Paulinus, but had left unfinished at his death. Still though Oswald did not neglect his southern people the Deiri, yet his chief labors seem to have been among the Bernicians. There was good reason for this.<sup>3</sup> From the labors of St. Paulinus the southern province was in some measure supplied with churches, schools, oratories and crosses, whereas the Bernicians were almost wholly destitute of them. Cadwalla's army of occupation seems also to have been mainly fixed in Bernicia, and thus the vestiges of Christianity had been much more completely effaced there than among the Deiri.

Soon after his accession Oswald went to the court of the West Saxons to demand of Kinegils his daughter

<sup>3</sup> Alford sub anno 635.

Kyneburga in marriage. This princess is not to be confounded with the saint of that name the daughter of king Penda of Mercia, and the foundress of Caistor nunnery on the river Nen. It so happened that when Oswald was at the West Saxon court the most holy bishop Birinus came to preach the Gospel to Kinegils ; and that monarch becoming a convert to the faith, Oswald was his sponsor at the font, the spiritual father of the man whose son-in-law he soon afterwards became, and thus the name of our saint is connected with the foundation of the see of Dorchester. But these events belong to the life of St. Birinus.

The reign, therefore, of king Oswald was by no means an unimportant one in an historical or political point of view. He was, as men speak, a successful conqueror, a skilful statesman, and an enlightened improver of his dominions. Yet is it true that his life to our eyes resembles more the life of an ecclesiastic than of a king :—*to our eyes*, for with us the world and its concerns have encroached so fearfully upon the business of our lives that to set apart anything like a fair portion of time to devotional exercises or the mortifications of penance is considered proper only for ecclesiastics ; and thus have men come to the error of confounding the clergy with the Church, until, perceiving the consequences of such a mistake, they charge the ambition of priests with inventing and fostering what was but the stupid and perverse misconception of the slothful laity. Few things are more striking in the lives of the saints, than the wonderful manner in which kings and pontiffs were enabled to sanctify themselves beneath the pressure of secular business. We are told of St. Antoninus of Florence, a most energetic and sedulous bishop, that over and above the

Church offices, he contrived to recite daily the office of our Lady and the seven penitential psalms, together with the office for the dead twice a week, and on every feast-day the whole psalter. And yet this was the man who from an abiding sense of his being the accountable person at the last day would scarcely permit his vicar to relieve him of the smallest of his episcopal duties in that large and busy see. There is scarcely any limit to what an earnest will may do : and surely there is a grave lesson to us in all this. For how do we moderns mostly fritter our time away, making a business of things childishly unimportant, and calling upon the exercises of a devotional life to give way at almost every turn to imaginary duties, which suit our restless tempers better than the solitude and silence and secret contemplation wherein the life of the soul consists !

King Oswald was not idle when he was interpreting the Scotch sermons of St. Aidan. But much of his time was spent in occupations which had even less reference to this world than that edifying work of humility and love. He was, as all saints have been, a lover of heavenly contemplation ; and he was wont to tell his bishops that it had pleased God at many times so to purge his bodily vision that he had clearly beheld the splendor of the angels and spirits, whose offices and orders were likely to be favorite subjects of meditation to a mind constituted as his was. Feeling how intimately allied the grace of chastity was with this blissful communion with the world of spirit he prevailed upon his queen to consent to their living, a life of continence, that so they might more resemble those happy spirits who neither marry nor are given in marriage, and might the rather become to them an object of special love, ministry and protection.

His hours of devotion were stolen from sleep rather than from the toils of government. He rose at midnight for the nocturns and lauds, and when the office was over he remained in prayer till it was day. Such a habit of recollection and prayer did the holy king attain that in all times and places he was praying; and whenever he sat down it came natural to him to turn up his hands upon his knees in act of prayer: an attitude which is not unfrequently to be seen in old illuminations. It became, St. Bede tells us, a popular proverb that king Oswald died in prayer; for when he was surrounded by the weapons of his enemies he cried, as he fell to the ground, "Lord! have mercy on their souls!" a petition which might perhaps have a double reference, as well to those of his own soldiers who perished as to his enemies who slew him.

As it was thus vouchsafed him at the close of his life to copy the example of our Blessed Lord, so on another occasion was it permitted him to act over again the part of holy David, and yet therein to copy our Lord also. During his reign there broke out a dreadful pestilence among his people, so that nothing was to be seen all round but funerals, nothing heard but the lamentations of the affrighted survivors. This mournful spectacle weighed heavy on the spirit of king Oswald; and though it does not appear that the plague was lying on the people because of the monarch's sins, yet he humbly entreated God to take himself and his family as victims of the cruel disease, and to spare his people. Of course none but a very holy person could venture without profaneness on such a prayer as this: and like St. Paul's supplication for Israel, it was perhaps offered up under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. To pray for the high and awful privileges of suffering is

something more than to covet them. Love will prompt even those whose obedience is but scant and sorry measure to covet earnestly for poverty, contempt, obscurity, loneliness and pain, who yet would feel that it was unbecoming for men of their poor attainments to pray directly for such things, lest the petition should spring from a momentary heat, not from a bold and steadfast tranquillity, and then it would be so very dreadful were God to answer it, and we to fail beneath the trial.

But what is so bold as simplicity and a single heart? It was in this temper that Oswald offered up his venturesome prayer; and most graciously, because most literally, was it answered. He was seized by the plague with unusual violence; it would seem from the narrative as though there was something unusual in the severity of the attack. Yet who so joyful as the suffering king? It was so directly a visitation of God, as to be a great consolation to one who thirsted after that blessed Presence as the hart desireth the water-brooks. And there he lay upon his cross, an acceptable expiation, through the meritorious intercession of his Lord, for the sins of his people. While he thus lay expecting death, offering his life for the life of others, he beheld in an ecstasy three figures of unearthly form and stature, who came to his bedside, and spoke comfortable words to him. At length one of them said, "Thy prayers and meekness, O king, are accepted with God; thou belongest to us, for as a reward of thy faith, charity and piety thou shalt shortly be crowned with an immortal crown. But not at present: God giveth thee now both thy life and thy subjects' lives: thou art ready to die a martyr for them; but thou shalt soon die far more happily as a martyr for God." After this the vision disappeared, leaving the king full of inward joy and

consolation. His bodily health was now restored ; the infection went no further, for the plague was stayed in the person of the saint, and the angel of wrath appeased by his self-sacrifice.<sup>4</sup>

The same heroic simplicity characterized his giving of alms. Indeed there seems hardly any virtue which calls more for the readiness and singlemindedness of faith than almsgiving. There are so many apparent reasons against it : the brevity and absoluteness of the evangelical rule so little squares with the circumstances of society in *any* age : it seems to be so constantly on the point of sacrificing discretion to impulse, that really a person to be a cheerful and hearty almsgiver must have advanced some way towards that childlike temper which is the perfection of our regenerate nature. People forget that He who gives His sunshine and His rain to the evil and good is set before us as our pattern in the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. The generosity of the world—and it has its ages of generosity—invents for itself a cumbrous and slowly-moving system, a huge and complicated apparatus for dispensing alms ; but all which it attains is the neglect of some deserving objects through fear of blessing any undeserving, an end not worth attaining, if it were right, but which, if we are to copy God, is absolutely wrong. At best heartiness evaporates in the long and secular process, and secrecy which is the life of evangelical alms is rendered most difficult, and self-forgetfulness in the matter wellnigh impossible ;

<sup>4</sup> This story is given on the authority of Capgrave, not of Bede : not that there seems any reason for doubting its truth ; yet as the rest of St. Oswald's life (except what is said of his frequently seeing Angels) is supported by the unimpeachable testimony of Bede, it seemed better to mark what was not.

yet surely even self-forgetfulness, which is something more than secrecy, is plainly intimated in our Saviour's words.

A popular book descants with almost contemptuous pity on the mistaken philanthropy of St. Charles Borromeo. To such minds the following anecdote of St. Oswald will seem to record nothing beyond an unwise impulse countenanced by a superstitious bishop. However, it will be both soothing and edifying to those who have felt how hard it is to restrain those impulses to feed the hungry and to clothe the naked, when the occasions present themselves, or, say rather, are providentially brought to us, on days when the Church is in joy and at feast for some great thing wrought for her by her Lord. It was on Easterday that king Oswald sat at dinner with a fitting Easter guest, the holy bishop Aidan. Before him stood a silver dish full of kingly dainties, and they were on the point of lifting up their hands to bless the bread, when suddenly a servitor appeared who filled a characteristic office in the royal household—to look out for and relieve the poor. He knew his master too well to fear it would be any disturbance to him at his feast to tell him that the streets about the palace were thronged with poor asking an alms of the king. Oswald's eyes fell on the silver dish and the royal dainties, and without a moment's hesitation he ordered the dainties to be divided among the poor, and the sumptuous dish to be cut in pieces and distributed amongst them. Probably as he spoke he raised his right hand to make some gesture to the servant, possibly pointing to the lordly dish. St. Aidan was at his side : delighted with the pious act he seized his master's hand, and said, "May this hand never perish !" and the bishop's benediction was ful-

filled, for the hand and arm, severed from his body in the battle, remained uncorrupted down to St. Bede's time, and received the veneration of the faithful in St. Peter's church at Bamborough. No doubt the common fare which was left for the king was better seasoned than the dainties he had given to the poor : and a merry heart was Oswald's Easter feast that year.

These are but grapes from Eschcol, samples of what the good king Oswald did and said during the eight years of his earthly reign : enough is left on record for the love and homage of the faithful, the rest is known to God ; some going before the martyr to judgment, and some following after ; for if sinners bequeath their sins in legacy to their descendants, much more do the mighty relics of the Saints continue to edify and bless the Church.

The reign of this holy king closed in the year 642. Penda, the pagan tyrant who had slain St. Edwin, invaded the dominions of St. Oswald. A battle was fought at Maserfeld on the 5th of August, Oswald being thirty-eight years of age. The hour predicted by the three heavenly personages was now come, when he was to be offered up a martyr to God. Many persons find a difficulty in the use of the word *martyr*, as sanctioned by the Church. They would have it restricted to such as made a theological confession of the faith before the tribunal of heathen magistrates, and suffered unto death for such confession. Yet surely this is a narrow view to take of the matter. Whosoever witnesses to Christ by his death is in some sense a martyr, and as such witness may take almost innumerable shapes and be capable of manifold degrees, so in a fuller or remoter sense, from the quiet death-bed of a Saint to the shows of the amphitheatre, may the word martyrdom be applied to



the dying confession of a Christian. There can be little doubt that Penda's hatred of Oswald arose in no slight measure from his being a Christian ; and the interests of the Church seemed humanly speaking to be involved in the success of Oswald.

However, Oswald was slain upon the field. His forces were far inferior to the pagan army, and it pleased God to take him to Himself. When the weapons of his enemies were bristling above his head, and he was overshadowed with them as by a grove of trees, he prayed the prayer before alluded to, and breathed his last beneath a multitude of wounds. There seems in the reverence paid to him in after-ages something of affection mingled as for a young person ; and his youth is dwelt upon as if it were a resting point for love. So when he is said to have appeared to Earnan the monk of Lindisfarne together with St. Cuthbert in Durham abbey, he was clothed in a red robe, his face was long, his stature tall, his beard scarcely visible from his youth, and altogether a most beautiful young man ; and the monk seems to bring out his youth in contrast with the venerable and awe-inspiring visage of the mighty Cuthbert.

There is a controversy respecting Maserfeld, the scene of Oswald's martyrdom. Camden, Capgrave, Raine and others place it at Oswestry in Shropshire, and the name certainly goes someway toward a proof of their opinion. Alban Butler, Powel and Cowper place it at Winwick in Lancashire, and for their view there is an inscription on the outside of the south wall of the parish church : and certainly Winwick was in aftertimes distinguished by a special devotion for St. Oswald.

No sooner was Oswald dead than the brutal Penda caused his head and arms to be severed from his body

and stuck on poles. They appear to have remained on the battle-field till the following year, when Oswy removed them, and sent the head to Lindisfarne. But the lives of Saints in many cases do not end with their deaths : their influence over the visible Church is often more signally exerted through their relics than it was in their sojourn upon earth. Somewhat of that power which they now have in their glorified state is permitted to be transfused into their mortal remains, and through them to act upon the Church. Many of the Saints have lived and died almost in obscurity, whose relics have worked wonders for centuries ; God who saw them in secret while on earth thus manifesting them openly after He has taken them from us.

The rest of St. Oswald's relics were afterwards translated by queen Ofthrida the daughter of Oswy, and niece of the Saint, to her favorite monastery of Bardney in Lincolnshire. The car freighted with this precious burden arrived at the gates of the monastery when it was growing dusk. The monks, though they acknowledged his sanctity, refused to admit the relics on the ground of his having reigned over them as a foreigner. This was an unexpected obstacle. Meanwhile a large tent was pitched over the car to protect the sacred remains from the dew, and to show at least some reverence towards them. As the night became dark, a long luminous pillar stood over the car, and seemed to reach to heaven. It was seen far and wide, so that wellnigh all the inhabitants of Lincolnshire were witnesses of this miraculous attestation of king Oswald's sanctity. It is not impossible that the refusal of the monks of Bardney to admit the relics on the previous evening had some connexion with St. Oswald's adoption of the Scotch usages. His being a foreigner in an ecclesias-

tical sense would sink deeper in the minds of holy brethren given up, like the angels, to perpetual liturgy and divine ceremonial, than his merely being a temporal ruler usurping the throne of St. Edwin's children. However this may be, the miraculous splendor which rested during the night above the relics seemed clearly a heavenly token, to which they joyfully submitted, and prayed with much earnestness to be allowed now to receive into their monastery the remains of one so dear to God. The bones were carefully washed, and deposited in a shrine within the Church, above which was hung a banner of purple and of gold. The water in which the relics had been washed was poured out reverently in a corner of the consecrated enclosure, and the earth which it had moistened was gifted with the power of casting out devils.

Even the ground where it fell received into it a power of miracle. Men scraped up the dust, and putting it into water administered it to their sick, and they were healed : it being no wonder, as Bede beautifully remarks, that it should work this kind of miracles, inasmuch as when alive the Saint had been so distinguished for his care of the poor and ailing. We are told on the same authority, that not very long after his death and the removal of his relics a traveller was journeying near the place where he fell. His horse through fatigue or some other cause was seized with a violent fit, and rolled on the ground foaming. The rider expected every moment to see the beast die, when to his astonishment it happened to roll upon the very spot where Oswald fell, and immediately the fit ceased, and after turning quietly from side to side the horse rose and began to eat the grass. The traveller did not know he was on the spot

where the king was slain ; but there was something so evidently miraculous in the cure that he felt convinced there was some special sanctity in the place, and carefully set a mark upon it that he might know it again. Such was the turn of men's minds in ages when the invisible world was so much more vividly realized than it is now, when the blinding veils of science falsely so called intervene to rescue men from the irksome contemplation of the awful realities of the unseen world. At the inn where the traveller halted for the evening, the landlord's niece lay sick of the palsy, and while the people in the house were deploring her illness, he recounted what had happened to his horse. Faith was not wanting in the people : the patient was taken in a cart, and laid down on the spot where Oswald died, there fell asleep, and awoke cured of her infirmity, returning on foot to the house.

Another traveller, of whom Bede speaks, was passing by the battle-field, when he observed a place round which the herbage was unusually green. He, arguing as the other had done, concluded that the soldier slain there, whoever he was, was the holiest man of the host : whereupon he put a quantity of the earth into a linen cloth, intending to use it for the cure of sick people. At night he came to a village, and was invited into a house where the master was feasting his neighbors, and he hung the cloth containing the earth upon a post in the wall. The house was thatched and the walls merely wattled, and a huge fire burned in the centre. From the carelessness of conviviality the fire seems to have been neglected, and some sparks communicating with the thatch a conflagration ensued. The house was entirely burned down, except the post on which the earth was hung, and that remained miraculously untouched

by the flames. In consequence of these two miracles pilgrims began to frequent the place where St. Oswald fell, either for the cure of their own infirmities, or to fetch earth for the healing of their relatives.

When queen Ofthrida, who removed St. Oswald's relics to Bardney, was once upon a visit at that monastery, there came to stay with her an abbess, the venerable Ethelhilda. In conversation the abbess mentioned how she had seen the luminous column which stood over the body of Oswald, when it was excluded from the monastery: the queen in turn related how even the dust of the pavement, whereon the water in which his bones had been washed was poured, had healed many sick people. Ethelhilda before her departure from Bardney requested that some of the dust might be given her. This she deposited as a rich treasure in a casket and went her way. Soon after there came to her monastery a guest who was possessed with a devil; and the night of his arrival the evil spirit took him so that he foamed at the mouth, and gnashed his teeth, and all his limbs were distorted. No one being able to hold him, alarm was given to the abbess, who going with one of the nuns to the door of the man's apartment called for a priest to go with her to her guest. The exorcisms of the priest proved unavailing. At last the abbess bethought her of the sacred dust. No sooner was it brought into the porch of the room where the sufferer was than the convulsions ceased. The man sat up and sighing deeply, like one wearied, said, "Now am I sound, and have received the senses of my mind." Whereupon he was asked how he had come to himself, and he answered, "Presently when that virgin came with the casket to the threshold the spirits who vexed me disappeared." The abbess gave

him a little of the holy dust, and he was never troubled by his enemy again.

In the monastery of Bardney before mentioned there was a little boy who had been long tormented by the ague. One day when he was mournfully anticipating the periodical return of his fit, a monk said to him, "Child ! shall I tell you how to get rid of this infirmity ? Rise, go into the church, and sit by Oswald's tomb, stay there quietly, and do not leave the place. Do not stir till the hour of the return of the fever is past ; then I will come in and fetch you away." The boy did so ; the disease did not fall on him while he sat by the Saint's grave, and after persevering in this devotion two or three days the ague left him altogether.

But it was not only in England that many wonders were wrought by his relics. In Ireland also and in Germany were miracles performed through the intercession of St. Oswald. Wilbrord was wont to speak of what prodigies had been performed among the Frisons, and it formed part of that holy man's conversation with Wilfrid while the latter stayed with him. And one miracle specially Wilbrord related, as having happened in Ireland when he was a priest. A great pestilence broke out, and among its victims was a certain scholar, addicted to worldly literature, but hitherto not concerned about his soul. As his death drew near, the scholar's mind became overshadowed by the fear of hell. In his terror he sent for Wilbrord who was in the neighborhood, and with a broken voice complained to him ; " My disease increases, and I am now about to die ; and I doubt not that after the death of my body, my soul will be carried away into the torments of hell, for although I have studied divinity, yet have I been engaged in vice rather than in keeping the Divine laws.

But I am resolved, if God's mercy should spare me, to correct my evil habits and submit my whole life to the Divine Will. Yet I know I do not deserve to have my life prolonged, neither can I expect it except through the aid of those who have faithfully served God. We have heard, for it is everywhere spoken of, that there has been in your country a wonderfully holy king, called Oswald, the excellency of whose faith and holiness has even after death been attested by many miracles. I pray you, if you have any of his relics, bring them to me ; peradventure the Lord will please for his merits to have pity upon me." Wilbrord answered that he had some of the stake on which his head was impaled ; and asked him if he had faith in God's goodness and the holiness of St. Oswald. The sufferer replied that he had : whereupon Wilbrord blessed some water and put a chip of the holy oak into it, and the sick man drank, and was healed. Through Divine grace he kept his vow, and became an eminent servant of God.

Thus did it please God to glorify His servant St. Oswald. Of his blessed relics nothing more need now be said, except that when the monks fled from Lindisfarne it seems that St. Oswald's head was put into the same coffin with the body of the mighty Cuthbert, and with it performed the same long and mysterious pilgrimage from east to west, and back again to the east, until it reposed in the lordly abbey of Durham. "*Deus, qui glorificatur in consilio sanctorum, magnus et terribilis super omnes qui in circuitu ejus.*"

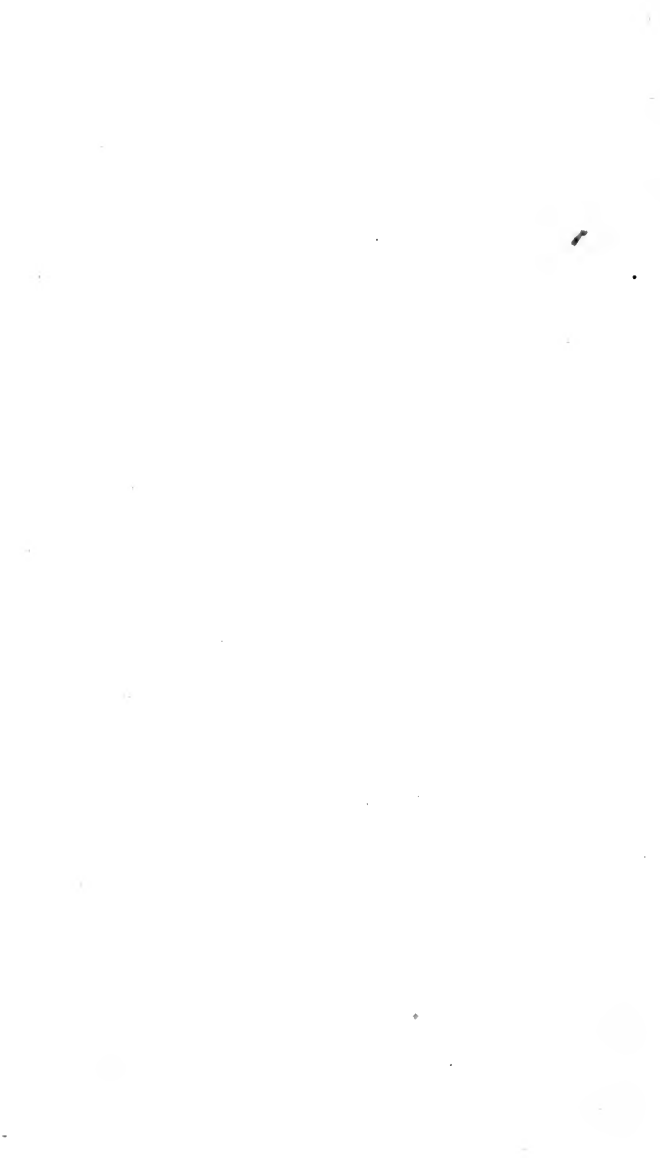
It would seem that public and authorized reverence was soon paid to the relics of St. Oswald, and we know that they were carried about during the Danish invasion, in such way as to show that they were very much set by. But there is a miracle, or as the modern

Italians would more correctly say, a *grazia*, recorded in the fourth book of St. Bede's history, which seems to be connected with the first public celebration of St. Oswald's day. The monastery of Selsey, founded by St. Wilfrid, was ravaged in 681 by a fierce pestilence while Eappa was abbot. The monks, in order to deprecate the Divine Wrath, set apart three days for solemn fasting and prayer. At this time there was in the monastery a little Saxon boy, recently converted, and who was confined to his bed by the plague. He was a boy of unusually gentle disposition and mild demeanor, and a deep reverence for the faith he had lately learned; and altogether one whose simplicity would render him a likely person to be favored with a heavenly vision. While he was lying alone in the infirmary about seven in the morning of the second fast-day, there appeared to him in vision two wonderful personages, who saluted him very lovingly, and said, "You are uneasy about death, young child; but do not fear it, for we are come to carry you to-day to the heavenly kingdom. However you must first wait till the masses are said, and you must receive the viaticum of the Lord's Body and Blood, and so freed at once from infirmity and death, you shall be carried up to the eternal joys of heaven. Now, then, call the priest Eappa and tell him that the Lord has heard your prayers, and turned a gracious eye on your devotion and fasting: no one therefore of this monastery, or its neighboring possessions, shall henceforth die of this plague. All who are at present laboring under it, among your people, shall recover from their sickness, except yourself, and you shall this day be freed by death, and taken to the vision of our Lord Christ, whom you have faithfully served. The Divine mercy



has granted this through the intercession of the religious king Oswald, dear to God, who formerly reigned over the Northumbrians with the authority both of temporal power and Christian sanctity, which leads to an eternal kingdom. For it was on this same day that that king was slain in battle by the infidels, and was presently assumed to the eternal joys of souls, and enrolled among the armies of the elect. Let them consult their books, which contain the obituaries, and they will find that he was on this day taken out of the world. Let them then say mass in all the oratories of this monastery, as well in thanksgiving for their prayers being heard, as in commemoration of king Oswald, who once governed their nation. On this account it was that he suppliantly offered up his prayers for them as for strangers of his people, and let all the brethren be convened in church, and let them all communicate in the Heavenly Sacrifice, and give over fasting, and refresh their bodies with food."

These words the little Saxon boy duly related to Eappa, who made particular inquiries as to the dress and appearance of the persons who had appeared to him. The boy told him that they were noble and beautiful beyond what he could have conceived, and that the one was bearded, but the other shorn like a clerk, and that one was called Peter and the other Paul, and that Jesus had sent them to protect the monastery. Eappa, referring to the chronicles, found that it was really the anniversary of St. Oswald's death. The masses were said, all communicated, the little boy received the viaticum, and the fast was broken; and before sunset the boy died, and the plague ceased, and ever after St. Oswald's day was observed, and a very solemn mass celebrated thereon.



## THE LIFE OF

# St. Oswin,

KING AND MARTYR, A.D. 651.

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It is impossible to write of that fair portion of our native land, which was the kingdom of St. Edwin, St. Oswald and St. Oswin, without reflecting upon its present state and the changes it has undergone. It is no longer the land of greenwood, blythe forester and openhearted baron and wandering balladmonger : but the world must change, if for no other reason at least for this, that it may sicken its children of putting confidence in it, and too much work lies before us of the nineteenth century to allow us to stand still to be merely poetical in our regrets. So let the baron go, and the balladmonger, though there might be much about them which was the type of a healthier and heartier state of things. But Northumberland is no longer the land of royal monasteries, of sacred shrines, of ennobling traditions, of active catholicism, or an effective Church. It is a region of ecclesiastical ruins, of upbraiding memorials of the past, with materials which Churchmen in their present position have no room to act upon, however zealous and self-denying they may be. Using the word Northumberland in its old sense, not for the modern county only, the face of the land is literally darkened, the sun obscured, the

verdure tinged, the waters dyed, by the consequences of that mineral wealth for which it is now so famous the whole world over. And more than this—what concerns us more nearly is that there are cumbrous clouds of population, almost homeless, swaying here and there as the changes and the swervings of trade and employment propel them ; a sight sufficient to paralyze the parish priest, a monster which the mere parochial system cannot dream of coping with ; and contemporaneously with this new startling phenomenon, so well has Satan contrived his schemes that the ecclesiastical wealth of the palatinate is drained off from its proper localities just when it was most wanted. How easy does it seem for our holy mother the Church to pour forth an itinerant army of rough and eloquent friars into this mass of sin, wretchedness and disorder, and by God's help to make it instinct with catholic life and purity, how sure the results, how infinitely blessed ! Yet are we so tied and bound by our sins, by a poor feeble unhealthful system which is the consequence of sin, that we must needs sit still and with drooping hearts confide to money and to stone chapels and material school-houses the mission given at the first, and for ever, to flesh and blood, to living apostolic teachers. But let us be content : mayhap we have not vital heat and active nerve enough within us to throw out such a power of ardent life as would be necessary to compass these huge masses of people ; for the present let it suffice us to be working that way, and seek for consolation from those wells of hope for the future, the actual deeds and sufferings of a better past : and with this thought let us go to the scanty notices which we have left of Oswin, the humble and the affable, who ruled the kingdom of Northumberland

in the seventh age. And as to the trammels of our ailing system, think what thousands of monks are chanting every tierce, *Memor fui judiciorum tuorum a sæculo, Domine ; et consolatus sum.*

When the monk of Tynemouth was asked by his brethren to write the life and martyrdom of St. Oswin<sup>1</sup>, he found in the reign of king Stephen a copiousness and a scarcity of materials. It was hard to say which of the two embarrassed him most ; for on the one hand Bede had said very little, and what Bede had not said was very likely apocryphal, and on the other there was a great desire to write a life, an edifying life, of a Saint so highly venerated among the northern catholics. However he resolved to follow Bede, and to dilate only upon those many miracles which had been wrought through the intercession or by the relics of St. Oswin. We must be content therefore to take St. Oswin as one of the cases not uncommon in hagiology, where what is actually known of the Saint is quite disproportioned to the extent and degree of veneration paid to him by Christians. This may be partly owing to the copiousness of posthumous miracles, as with the nameless remains of martyrs in the catacombs to which some arbitrary title, as of a Christian virtue, has been given ; and partly to the fact that where an immediate and widely-spread popular devotion to a saint arose, men did not at first think of recording what everybody about them knew without reading.

Oswin was the son of Osric king of the Deiri, the monarch who unhappily apostatized from the faith, and was afterwards slain by the bloody Cadwalla of Cum-

<sup>1</sup> Published by the Surtees Society from the MS. Cotton, Julius, A. X.

berland. At the time of his father's death Oswin appears to have been quite a child, so that, being beneath the notice of the vindictive conqueror, his friends managed to carry him off among the West Saxons. It would seem that he was baptized while young, either before his father was slain, or when he was first taken among the Christian subjects of Kinegils. He lived in exile for ten long years, greatly edifying those among whom he dwelt. He was very beautiful, tall of stature, and of a particularly engaging address ; but these things, which to most young men are calamities as being so many occasions of falling, he turned to the glory of God. Among other virtues he was so conspicuous for the grace of chastity that his biographer compares him to Joseph while dwelling among the Egyptians. Among posterity generally his more especial grace was thought to be humility : and indeed it is very observable how intimately connected a lowly mind seems to be with pure thoughts, so that one virtue appears to follow as a consequence upon the other. For bashfulness which is the shield of purity is close upon humility.

Like so many other of the Saxon kings, Oswin learned the art of reigning in the school of exile. After the death of St. Oswald Oswy became king of the Bernicians ; Oswin returned from exile, and either by Oswy's adoption, as some say, or by the election of the nobles, according to others, was raised to the throne of the Deiri. When we come within the sphere of the Church, how the jarring sounds of earthly strife seem all stilled ! Saint reigns after Saint among the Northumbrians, yet the reign of one is the exile of the other ; the term of power with the one is exactly the term of depression with the other. Yet the exile is God's school : there the Saint was made, and Oswald seems as it were the stern author

of the sanctity of Oswin. So it was with Oswald himself: the death of the blessed Edwin opens the gates of his native land to the fugitive prince, the future king and Saint. Thus is evil temporary: thus even in time is the Church anticipating the eternal order of things, weeding out evil from the creation of God, gathering it into bundles, and burning it. Thus while history is a continuous record of splendid sins, the lives of the Saints have also their continuity; to the world's eye much is left out of what forms the history of a nation, but holy legends teach us to see the course of things more as Angels see it, laying bare the footprints of the Most High, and revealing the under-current of history, slow and tranquil and imperturbed as the peace which is around the Throne Invisible. The secular details of Oswin's reign are not preserved to us; doubtless they were full of that consistency and sagacity which high principle invariably displays. The general results, however, are told us; they were peace, order, and the happiness of those beneath his sway. We may be sure also that ecclesiastical matters prospered under his care; for there existed the closest friendship between the sovereign and the holy bishop Aidan. Oswin's biographer, the monk of Tynemouth, beautifully exclaims, "O man full of piety! O worthy of a crown! In that time the most blessed bishop Aidan ruled with his pastoral care the province of the Northumbrians. He was a Scot by birth, catholic in his faith. St. Oswald the king had raised him to the episcopate, and by his preaching Divine grace had converted no small number of the people to the faith of Christ. It was this holy man's custom to teach the people committed to his charge, not in the Church only, but seeing how tender the young faith yet was, he went about the province entering the houses of

the believers, and sowing the seed of the divine word in the field of their hearts, as each one was able to receive it. This man, so careful of the flock entrusted to him, used often to come to St. Oswin king of the Deiri, and stay with him on account of the sweet odor of his sanctity. He admonished him to persevere in good works, and always to be advancing to better things, and the summits of perfection, and, taught by the Holy Spirit, he forewarned him how that he must pass to the heavenly kingdom through martyrdom. The king, receiving him as a Saint, gave diligent heed to his preaching the words of life ; and holding himself in devout subjection to that most beloved father, he corrected at his reproof whatsoever he had done amiss. The bishop indeed was beyond measure delighted with the humility and obedience of the king, and often held familiar converse with him about the contempt of the world, the sweetness of a heavenly life and the glory of the Saints. The king was by no means a forgetful hearer of the word of God, but a zealous doer of the same ; and according as he had learned from his good master, he took care of all with a fatherlike affection, benignantly relieving the poor and especially strangers, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and bestowing favors with alacrity upon all who asked them. There was between them such a confederacy of mutual love, that the king held the holy bishop for an Angel, and obeyed his suggestions as though they were inspired. The bishop on the other hand loved the king as though he were part of his own soul, one while upbraiding him as a son if he were too much occupied, as men are wont to be, in secular matters, another while cherishing and inflaming him like a dear friend with spiritual conversation.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Vita S. Oswini, c. i. sub fin.



A most beautiful example of this intercourse between the bishop and the king has been left on record for our edification. We have already alluded to St. Aidan's custom of making circuits through his diocese and entering houses and catechizing. These pastoral journeys he mostly performed on foot, after the example of our Blessed Lord, of whom we read only once that He rode upon an ass, entering His own city in such meek triumphal guise that the prophet's words might be fulfilled. Personal fatigue and hardship and what the world would call loss of time were not the only disadvantages which the holy prelate sustained. The frequent rivers and streams of the northern shires of England, for the most part rapid and stony, were to be forded often at the risk of life. To save the bishop from this peril, as well as to lighten his labors, Oswin made him a present of a very valuable horse, which St. Aidan accepted. Possibly the bishop put less value upon it than the king, for riding would not be so favorable as walking to the constant self-recollection and mental prayer which he doubtless practised on his journeys, making the intervals of passage from place to place in some measure to compensate the loss of that former monastic leisure which he had cheerfully given up for the edification of his neighbour. However this may be, Oswin's horse did not stay long with St. Aidan. For soon after the present had been made, the bishop mounted on his horse, adorned with rich and royal trappings, met a beggar who asked him for an alms. The Saint with the utmost alacrity dismounted from his steed, and presented it with all its furniture to the poor man. Either that day or shortly afterwards St. Aidan was to dine with the king: before dinner some one told Oswin of what was perhaps considered the slight put by the

bishop on the royal beneficence. As they were going to the banquet Oswin said, "My Lord Bishop! why did you give to a poor man that royal horse which it was more fitting to keep for your own use? Have we not plenty of horses of less price and of commoner sorts which would have been good enough for gifts to the poor without your giving them that one which I had particularly selected for your own possession?" Whether the king spoke as if nettled by the apparent slight, or complainingly as if hurt by the want of attachment shown in parting so lightly with a friend's gift, we are not told; but the bishop was ready with his answer, "What is that you say, O king? Is that foal of a mare dearer to you than that son of God?" meaning the beggar. It would seem from the narrative that Oswin was somewhat out of temper, and was brooding over the matter in his mind. For when they entered the banquet-room the bishop went and sat down in his accustomed place, while the king, who had just returned from hunting, stood and warmed himself at the fire. Perhaps there was something of an inward struggle going on. If so, it soon was over; for as he stood by the fire, he pondered the bishop's words, and suddenly ungirding his sword and giving it to a servant, he fell down at St. Aidan's feet and besought his forgiveness. "Never again," said the humbled king, "will I say any more of this, or take upon myself to judge what or how much of my treasure you bestow upon the sons of God." The bishop was much moved, and starting up he raised his sovereign, declaring that he was entirely reconciled to him, and begging that he would be seated and enjoy the banquet. Oswin did as the bishop said, and with the elasticity of spirits which ever follows close upon humbling ourselves to confess what we have done wrong, the king grew merry at the feast. But

the countenance of the bishop saddened, and the more lighthearted the good king became, so much the more was St. Aidan lost in silence and sorrow, and kept shedding tears. It chanced that a priest sat near, a Scot, who asked his bishop in the Scottish tongue, which the king did not understand, why he wept. "I know well," said Aidan, "that the king will not live long; for never have I seen before a prince so humble; wherefore I feel assured that he will soon be taken out of this life, for this nation is not worthy to have such a sovereign." This, whether it were prophecy, or that foreboding which men seem naturally to have when they look on great goodness, was too truly fulfilled.

Such was the intercourse between bishop and king, when both were Saints; and the monk of Tynemouth beautifully comments on it. "Truly the strict demand of equity is that the inferior should be willingly subject to the power of the superior. Nevertheless growth in righteousness brings it about that an equal sometimes submits to an equal; but that the superior should humble himself before the inferior comes only from the perfection of consummate righteousness. Wherefore the Great Creator humbling Himself to the baptism of His inferior creature, when the other shrunk, said, Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness, as though He meant by the superior humbling himself to the inferior. This perfection of righteousness in the blessed king Oswin, taught not by literary profession but by the unction of the Holy Paraclete, when forgetful of his regal majesty he lay at his bishop's feet, not only called out the wondering admiration of the wild people which he governed, but even kindled in religious fathers by his example a love of humiliation. But the bishops of those days

were not, as now,<sup>3</sup> pre-eminent in the insolent affluence of wealth, or the pompous luxury of precious vestments, even beyond secular folk, but poor in spirit, poor in means, and so easily open to contempt ; and on that very account it was all the more laudable to pay reverence unto them.”<sup>4</sup>

Oswin's biographer goes on to say that there were on record many other examples of his great humility, but that he will not relate them lest he should dwell too much on one of his virtues to the depreciation of the rest. One may regret that the good monk has robbed us through such an ill-founded apprehension. Next to humility mercifulness is counted as a special grace of Oswin's, mercifulness not only in the giving of alms, but in what often involves greater self-sacrifice and patience and alacrity,—in succouring the oppressed. At the same time he exhibited firmness and even forwardness (*acredo*) in repressing those who were disobedient to his laws. Neither were the interior exercises of a spiritual life forgotten ; he watched, he fasted, he prayed ; and it was in those things and out of those things that he got his humility. Such were the virtues with which “ that soul devoted to God was green as the spring, becomingly and abundantly.”

It would appear as if Oswy almost from the very first found it hard to brook the division of the kingdom, which the rule of St. Oswald had moulded into one. If then it were he who raised Oswin to the throne of the Deiri, he must have quickly repented of his own measure ; or if the elevation of our Saint were owing to the election of the nobles, it was probably distasteful to Oswy at the outset, but that circumstances controlled

<sup>3</sup> *i. e.* in the days of King Stephen.

<sup>4</sup> Vit. Osw. c. ii. sub fin.

his opposition or made it necessary for him to dissemble. The very sanctity of Oswin, being in the mouths of all, Bernicians as well as Deiri, was gall to Oswy, and fostered his malignant envy. As the monk words it, Oswy tried the serpent, before he took to the lion. In other words, he endeavoured for long to compass the death of Oswin by subtlety. But the love and fidelity of all around him was a shield which the dagger of the assassin could never penetrate. Sometimes the schemes of Oswy were detected or anticipated by the shrewdness of his intended victim: at other times Oswin was warned of them by the very men who were compelled to act as the instruments of Oswy. Thus passed seven years of outward peace and outward glory for Oswin; but we learn from this that even the throne was as it were a school of affliction. The continual sense of insecurity, the harassing continuance of suspicion, the weary diligence of warding off blows, the restlessness of being on the watch, the wretched feeling of having *one* enemy, of being a hunted thing,—such was the ermine which lined St. Oswin's crown; the very kind of life which God gave his servant David wherewithal to sanctify himself.

It is said that the reverence, which the character of St. Aidan compelled even from the dark-minded Oswy, was the main cause that for seven years outward peace was kept. Two years followed of still greater trial for Oswin. We are not told why; only it is recorded that these two years were more troubled than the foregoing ones: possibly the impatience of envy was unable to wear its disguise any longer, and broke out into more frequent displays of malignity. Besides which Oswy was enraged at being baffled by the sagacious gentleness of his enemy, and in half abhorrence

of his own meanness took refuge in the more masculine wickedness of open rage. To borrow the monk's similitude of the animals, weary and ashamed of crawling he resolved to roar and to devour ; and at last gathered together an army for Oswin's destruction.

Oswin likewise collected some forces, but so inconsiderable that it would appear as though he came rather to deprecate war than to make it. He met Oswy at Wilfar's Hill, about ten miles from Catterick, near the pleasant Swale, in whose clear waters St. Paulinus had baptized the Saxon peasantry of Yorkshire. Seeing the inferiority of his forces and yet their desperate resolution to sell their lives for their king, and considering that it was personal affection to himself which animated them, Oswin paused. The bloody slaughter which must ensue overshadowed his gentle spirit, and he could not endure to be the cause of death to so many, whether of his own little chivalrous band, or of his foes.<sup>5</sup> He therefore determined to withdraw from the field and disband his troops. If it was his crown which Oswy wanted, it was not much for him to resign it, and live in obscurity ; but if it were his life as well as his crown, why then, if we live, we live unto the Lord, and if we die, we die unto the Lord, therefore he could part with that also. He called his little army together and spoke to some such effect as this ; I say, *to some such effect*, for the monk's narrative seems a little more florid than the original legend probably was. "I thank you, my most faithful captains and strenuous soldiers, for your goodwill towards me ; but far be it from me that for my

<sup>5</sup> Though Bede's narrative quite admits of this turn, yet it treats Oswin's flight rather as an act of prudence than of heroic virtue. Not so the monk of Tynemouth. Of course both may be, and most probably are, true together.

sake only such danger should be run by you who from a poor exile made me<sup>6</sup> into a king. I prefer therefore to return into exile, nay, even to die, than to hazard so many lives. Let me in peace, and not in war, embrace the divine sentence against myself, conveyed to me by the mouth of the blessed bishop Aidan that through martyrdom must I enter the joys of heaven. I refuse not to end my earthly life in such order and time as Christ shall will." The soldiers seeing how earnestly their king coveted to depart and be with Christ, were wounded "with a deep wound in their hearts," and all with one accord went down on their knees before him, and wept, and prayed to fight for him. "Haply we may conquer ; we may break even through yon wedges of men ; but if not, let us die, and not pass into a proverb as deserters of our king." But Oswin was unmoved. He saw that it was himself and not his people who were aimed at, that Oswy would not ravage the country or oppress the people even for his own sake, and that by forbidding the battle he was not abandoning his subjects to the horrors of a cruel invasion. He explained this to his men, and concluded by saying, "I pant after martyrdom and the joys of the heavenly kingdom."

When he had said this, he prayed solemnly to God and said, "Father of mercy and God of all consolation, whose Son is the Angel of great counsels, whose Spirit is the Comforter in difficulties, grant me in this strait to choose the better way. For if I fight, I shall be guilty before Thee of the shedding of blood. If I fly, I shall be counted to have degenerated from the nobility of my parents, and to have fallen short of my

<sup>6</sup> The monk of Tynemouth therefore refers Oswin's exaltation to the election of the nobles, not to Oswy's voluntary choice.

station. Flying, I displease men : fighting, I am displeasing unto Thee." And so, says the monk, he fixed his anchor in God.

Oswin, disbanding his forces, chose one companion of his exile, a faithful adherent named Tondhere the son of Tylsius. With him he passed that evening from Wilfar's Hill to the village of Gilling on the west border of Yorkshire, which lies in a green and blythe valley of considerable depth, not far from Richmond. The estate, or to use a later word, the fief of Gilling, he had lately conferred upon count Hunwald, as one of his most attached courtiers ; and that he should turn out a traitor proves in what a state of insecurity Oswin must have passed his days, and how completely the meshes of his enemy encompassed him round about. So true it is, as with their Head, so with the Saints, their foes are they of their own household, and their wounds are received in the house of their friends. It is not probable that Oswin expected to escape death, though it was his duty to shun it ; for all that he said showed him to be completely and calmly possessed by the presentiment of its nearness. Hunwald received him into his house, and promised to conceal him.

Meanwhile Oswy was not altogether satisfied. True it was that he was master of the kingdom of the Deiri without opposition : but was his usurpation likely to be stable while one so ardently beloved as Oswin was lying somewhere in exile ? And was not his own personal hatred to be satisfied ? In truth he had been baulked of half his prey. He therefore commissioned count Ethelwin, one of his officers, to take a troop of soldiers, seek for the fugitive king, and kill him. The search was not long ; for the detestable Hunwald betrayed his guest. Ethelwin surrounded the castle



with his soldiers in the silence of the night, while Hunwald was paying the homage of his lips to his kind master. Ethelwin entered and notified to Oswin the fatal sentence of the conqueror. At first the king was disturbed with the suddenness of the event and the additional distress of having been betrayed by one under such great obligations to him. But, recovering his calmness and his dignity, he fortified his breast and tongue with the sign of the Cross, and said to Ethelwin, "The sentence of your king depends upon the permission of my King." He entreated the count to spare the life of his faithful servant Tondhere; but he refused to survive his master. Both were slain together, and buried together, at Gilling on the 20th day of August, 651, A.D.

So far as appears, St. Oswin remained unmarried. We may suppose that one who all his life long so earnestly coveted the best gifts was not likely to be without a holy ambition for the coronal of virgins, and that in virginity, that great fountain of almsgiving, and preceptress of humility, his holy soul would much delight. There are some of the Saints whose lives seem to have been moulded by a heavenly vision or some supernatural intimation of their own destiny. This touch of the invisible world appears to draw them apart, to give a direction to their lives, a tone to their character, to be to them as it were a kind of individual sacrament vouchsafed to them. They seem to sit all their days beneath the shadow of this sacred revelation, and to sanctify themselves in its secret presence. Perhaps too it will be generally found that the Saints whose lives have this peculiar feature most strongly (for in its measure may it not be the portion of all great Saints?) have been more especially distinguished by humility and a

mortified spirit. Thus with St. Oswin the heavenly intimation given him through St. Aidan that he should suffer martyrdom would doubtless haunt him perpetually, and be to a good man a constant source of self-restraint and gentleness. For to be entrusted with a secret of the Lord seems to bring the Divine Presence nearer, and the abiding sense of that Presence would be sure to humble a man exceedingly. The secret life of sovereigns has generally been very different from the show of court-days; and as with St. Oswin, so in many signal cases has it pleased God by His grace to make it a long hidden martyrdom of pain and care, and suffering for the faith, and austere self-discipline. Blessed are the monarchs whose brows are girt with the crown of thorns, though we see but the diadem of gold!

Soon after Oswin's death, the monk of Tynemouth would have it immediately afterwards, his remains were translated from Gilling to Tynemouth, where St. Oswald had founded a monastery. It was deposited in a chapel built beneath a rock on the north side of the river, an oratory of our Blessed Lady; and for some time his place of sepulture was reverently visited. But the Gospel suffered continual eclipses, partial or total, on the sea-coasts of Northumberland from the frequent landings and invasions of the heathen Danes; so that in course of time the exact place of St. Oswin's burial was forgotten, and so remained until the eleventh century. There was at that time at Tynemouth a man of the name of Edmund, a very pious person who led a monkish life and wore a monkish dress, and continued day and night in devotion to Christ and the holy Mother. He did not belong to any monastery, professed no rule, and was not bound by any regular discipline. But though living in the world he was as a

monk among its crowds. It happened that after a vigil he fell asleep in the Church, and as he slept there appeared to him in a dream a person of a vivid color and vigorous frame, tall of stature, and with a heavenly effulgence round him. Edmund gazed earnestly upon him, but, awe-struck by the majesty of his angelic countenance, did not venture to enquire who he was. At length the man called: "Brother Edmund! Brother Edmund!" Then Edmund with all reverence replied, "Who art thou, my lord?" "I am king Oswin slain by Oswy through the detestable treachery of count Hunwald, and I lie in this Church unknown to all. Rise therefore and go to the bishop Egelwin, and tell him to seek my body beneath the pavement of this oratory, and let him raise it up and re-inter it more becomingly in this same chapel?" In consequence of this the body was sought, and found. Judith the daughter of Baldwin earl of Flanders, and wife of Tosti earl of Northumberland, washed the martyr's hair still stained by blood; but except the hair and bones all had gone to dust. The feast of St. Oswin is kept on the 20th of August, it being the day of the solemn translation of his relics from the old oratory into the new Church of Our Lady at Tynemouth.

It would appear that Oswy afterwards repented of his crime, which William of Malmesbury imputes to malicious mischief-makers inciting him against St. Oswin. However, Eanfleda his queen, St. Edwin's daughter, got permission from her husband to found a monastery at Gilling wherein prayers should be said for the repose of Oswin's soul, and for the pardon of the guilty Oswy. It was one of the many holy houses which fell before the ruthless Danes.

Let us quote once more the words of the devoted

monk of Tynemouth.<sup>7</sup> “The Martyr in his glory still invites the wealthy by his example to the tranquil joys of paradise. For he did not attempt the way of sanctity, compelled by the urgency of poverty, or, as men are wont, by the feebleness of ailing health ; but, freely drawn by the sole contemplation of the Creator, he lived in the purple of a king, as David did, poor and sorrowing ; poor in spirit even while he abounded in the wealth and delicacy of a monarch ; sorrowful in spirit, because he trusted not his heart to his abundance of good things. For the more he abounded, the less desire had he for his abundance. In the midst of a noisy court, which was ever too much for him, he fled far off, and remained in the solitude of his mind, even when his subjects thronged about him. Abroad he carried himself in a kingly way, but inwardly he was a king over his own affections, courageously exercising himself in the love of humility and poverty. He girded himself up to all spiritual exercises, but seemed to pour out his whole being in the corporal works of mercy. His plenty was the needy man’s supply : the superfluities of the rich he deemed the necessaries of the poor. He thought a king owed most to those who could do least for him, and that justice was meant specially for the oppressed. And so was the holy king Oswin, because his people deserved not such a lord, slain by the sword of envy, and translated to the companies of the blessed Angels.”

<sup>7</sup> This monk was originally of St. Alban’s, then prior of Wymundeham ; he came to Tynemouth to give himself more completely up to the austerities of penance. What is said in the text of ailing health is touching, when we know that the writer suffered greatly at Tynemouth, and was restored to health through the intercession of his patron St. Oswin.

Very many graces are said to have been granted at the tomb of the royal martyr, and through his potent intercession. A life of St. Oswin would be scarcely complete, if some mention was not made of these. Perhaps it would be a simpler and more religious temper which would regard such things as miracles really accorded to the pleading and merits of the blessed Saint; there is, through God's mercy, a growing inclination among us to take these things reverentially, when there seems tolerable historical evidence in favor of them; and at any rate there is among many more a growing disinclination to speak lightly of such matters, and put them rudely aside. There is a pious suspense of mind which is surely an acceptable temper, more acceptable, it may be, than that mere hunger for the marvellous, which is very far indeed from calm discerning faith. However, we do not pretend to relate the following miracles either as sacred facts or as mere devotional fictions; they have an interest of another sort, which does not affect their possibly more solemn character, and for this lower interest we shall now put them before the reader.

If it evidence a poorer temper of mind and an age of cold hearts and incredulous intellects, yet surely it is allowable and edifying to dwell on the humanizing influences which the beliefs and devotions of the catholic Church have had on rough ages and among turbulent nations. It is not the less God's mercy, though there may be a more direct and awful manifestation of Him in such things. For many a long year of fear and vexatious misrule the "Peace of the martyr" was a pleasant and a safe shade under which the dwellers on the bleak sea-shore of Durham and Northumberland were glad to cluster like an affrighted sheep-flock; a

shadow cast by St. Oswin's memory from our Lady's House at Tynemouth far to the Cleveland Hills, and northward to the Tweed. The charities of life took root there with an assurance which the troubled times could not warrant : unnamed, unnumbered acts of peace, goodness, fidelity, restitution, self-restraint, were (so to speak) solemnized for the comfort of men through the "Peace of the martyr." It was *the Church making the world endurable*—her work in all ages, the way thereof, with fruitful diversity, different in every age.

We proceed then to relate three miracles, which particularly exemplify this. Let it be remembered that by miracles men are not only *helped*, but they are also *taught*. When, therefore, to the readers of one age the miracles of another long past away appear so grotesque as to provoke amusement, their seeming eccentricity is no ground for rejecting them. If men are to be taught, the teaching will be shaped for them, adapted to their way of looking at things, corresponding to their habits of thought, and as it were echoing the actual life and manners of the times. Supposing a miracle wrought for the conversion of a barbarous people, will it not almost certainly have a barbarous aspect, and be what a philosophical age would deem a *gross* display of supernatural power or goodness? A barbarian doubting of the Gospel would, as in numberless recorded instances, put its truth to a gross, carnal, rude test—something the satisfaction of which would make a rude man believe ; the missionary is inspired to accept the test, to venture his preaching upon it, works the required miracle, asked not in wantonness, but as a child would seek unwonted assurance for some unwonted promise ; and is the miracle so wrought, so fitting for its purpose, thus actually bringing men into the Church of God, a suitable

or decorous theme for elegant derision or playfully contemptuous narrative among the children of those barbarian ancestors whose simple-mannered ignorance it overruled to such a mighty and blissful end? Whether then the following miracles were wrought or not, they were *believed*; and such a faith would in rude times exert a most holy influence over manners and conduct, and in some sense vicariously discharge the sweetest office of law, while law was not yet come of age to discharge its own duties, namely, that of securing the happiness of private life, fostering and guaranteeing all the rights, jurisdictions, privileges, and subordinations of conjugal, filial, and fraternal piety, while it also inspired, ennobled, and insured all the gentle hallowing restraints of what is called with an expressive homeliness,—good neighborhood.

There is such a Christian virtue as hospitality, and the self-denial it for the most part involves may be that which chiefly gives it its Christian character. It was a virtue much needed in unsettled times, and much practised. When people saw graces given to strangers at the tombs of their own local Saints, they received a strong admonition to hospitality, most vividly conveyed. The following is a specimen of many such. There was a man of Norwich who had a profound reverence for the holy places where our Lord had trodden, spoken and acted when on earth. Three times did his pious thirst after those far-off fountains of prayer and tears drive him over land and sea to Jerusalem, long, arduous, perilous as the pilgrimage was. Returning home after his third visit, he determined to go northward to pay his devotions at St. Andrew's in Scotland, a place then regarded with singular veneration. He had, from long usage, become so accustomed to foreign diet that the

rough cheer of English plenty threw him into a violent illness ; this was accompanied every fifteen or sixteen days with excruciating spasms, and to gain relief from these seems to have been one, though not the sole object of this fresh pilgrimage to St. Andrew's. On his journey he passed through Newcastle-on-Tyne. In that town dwelt a man named Daniel, whose wife was a very godly woman, and specially devoted to the entertainment and care of strangers ; for which purpose she had built a house apart from her own dwelling. Here she received the Norwich pilgrim, and ministered to him with her own hands ; and here he was seized with his fit of spasms. It wounded the heart of his hostess to hear how the poor pilgrim filled the house with his pitiful cries. She consoled him to the best of her power, and furnished him with such comforts as she could, till after long agony his exhausted body found a little respite in sleep. In his sleep he dreamed a dream, or saw a vision. A man of a reverend countenance appeared to him, and asked him if he wished to recover from his sickness. " Yes, sir," he replied, " I covet it ardently." " Rise then in the morning," was the answer, " and hasten to St. Oswin, the king and martyr, so that on Tuesday next you may be present at the feast of the Invention of his relics, and by his merits there obtain the health you desire." The sick man inquired, " But who are you, sir, who promise me such good things ?" " What have you to do with me ? Go in faith and be healed." " Yet, sir," persisted the pilgrim, " I beseech you do not be angry, but tell me who you are, that by the authority of your name I may be assured of the solidity of your promise." Then the figure answered, " I am Aidan formerly the bishop of St. Oswin, and that you may believe, I will now by my



touch cure the pain in your head, leaving you to be healed of your inward spasms by St. Oswin." So saying he pressed upon the nose of the sleeping man, and immediately a copious flow of blood took place, which relieved his head. There was a maid watching by his bed-side, and when she saw her patient covered with blood she called her mistress, who at the request of the sick man sent for the priest of the parish. To him he related the vision, saying that Oswin he had heard a little of, but he did not so much as know the name of Aidan. As he was unable to walk, one of the neighbors kindly offered to take him to Tynemouth in his boat. They arrived there while the monks were in chapter, and laid the sufferer at the martyr's tomb, where he was presently healed of his disease.

If there ever was an age when Church holydays were multiplied to idleness and grew to be a burden to the land, there certainly have been ages when they were most kindly interruptions of the oppressive toils of poverty, most merciful restraints on landlords, and gentle mitigations of the hardships of the over-tasked peasantry. Now let us see how it was believed that St. Oswin interfered to vindicate for the poor the safe rest of his own festivals. Once, when all agricultural labor was suspended, a greedy clerk would not lose the day, but housed his grain. He was worldly wise ; people noticed him, but in those days they would not envy such an one. Shortly by some accident his barn took fire, and all his grain was burned. Accident translated into the language of those times was St. Oswin's vengeance. Again, when Archarius was prior of Tynemouth, there dwelt there for a little while a most expert goldsmith of the name of Baldwin, whom the prior took into his service to re-gild the martyr's shrine. St. Oswin's day

came round ; there was feasting and praying and holy-day at Tynemouth. Baldwin among the rest went to the feasting, and being an unsuspecting man, besides that it was St. Oswin's day, he did not close his shop-door so carefully as he might have done. His shop was close to the church, and among the crowds a thief managed to approach it unperceived, and carry away all the valuables he could lay hands on. This was a sacrilegious breach of the "Martyr's Peace." The public road was open to the thief ; he ran till he came to the limits of the "Peace," the border of the sanctuary, and there, though there was an open unhindered way before him, he could not move a step, but was miraculously rooted to the ground. Yet, though he could not advance, he could go here and there within the Peace as he pleased ; but it was invisibly fenced, and he could not pass the bounds. However, he betook himself to a little inn within the purlieu, where, by his startled face, the levity of his deportment, and the incoherency of his speech, something was suspected, and he was arrested. Meanwhile Baldwin had become acquainted with his loss, and with a heavy heart was complaining at the martyr's tomb, when the news came that the thief had been found, and his goods restored. The criminal was immediately hung, and the people feared, and glorified God for the wonderful protection of St. Oswin's Peace.

How beautiful it is amid the dazzling brightness, the wassail and the tournament, of the middle ages to catch a glimpse of some details of the unnamed poor ! How touching when those details tell how the poor ran to their Church as their natural refuge, and how the Church succoured, comforted, avenged the wrongs of the slighted cottager, the helpless woman, the toil-worn serf ! Here is a legend of St. Oswin's shrine, which is quite a Chris-

tian poem, very beautiful indeed. In the reign of William Rufus there was war on the Scottish border. William came to Newcastle-on-Tyne inflamed with ungovernable passion. The Scots had wasted the country all round, and were then butchering old and young, priest and layman, in the poor city of Durham. William advanced, and they fled before him, for they heard of his burning rage. Meanwhile there came fifty of William's ships to the mouth of the Tyne, laden with corn from the West Angles to supply the king during the Scottish war. The mariners were a rude ungodly company, and as the king had left Newcastle, and there was no one to restrain them, they plundered the houses round about, and did not fear to violate St. Oswin's Peace. There was an old woman, so weak and old that she was obliged to support herself on a staff; each year she consumed wholly with great pains and weary diligence in weaving a poor little web; it was her annual hope and harvest, and the year's web was now lying finished by her. Whether she was walking on the shore carrying her web to sell it, or whether she was in her cottage, does not appear from the narrative; but at any rate she was attacked by one of the sailors, but firmly as she grasped her precious web he tore it out of her hands. She wept and sobbed, and besought him by her patron St. Oswin that he would give her back the web; the sailor scoffed both at St. Oswin and herself. The indignant old woman with much effort hobbled up to the monastery, and went to the martyr's tomb, and begged him to redress her wrongs. "God," says the monk, "who despiseth not the tears of widows, heard the old woman's tearful sobs through the merits of the holy martyr." But she left the tomb dejected: no answer came to her prayers; night passed, and the web was

not returned, and morning brought a fair wind. She saw the white sails proudly set, and the fleet sweep down the sea towards Lindisfarne : her web was there, her one web, her year's livelihood ; St. Oswin had not heard her prayer. The ships at length disappeared ; they made a prosperous voyage to Coquet Island, a little to the north of Tynemouth. It is a rocky place, but the sea was calm, and the sailors careless. Now, without a wind or a cloud the sea began to grow ; and billows rose and rose, and the heavy swell thundered on the Coquet rocks. It seemed like a miracle, so tranquil, so beautiful the day. Still the sea rose, the ships were entangled among the shoals, they dashed one against another, were broken and sunk, and all hands perished. The north wind came, and the wrecks and corpses were all drifted ashore near Tynemouth. Not a thing stolen but what the sea gave it up again faithfully, for it was doing a divine work. The cottagers had hid themselves in the woods and caves, fearing the return of the sailors. They had returned in another guise than they expected, a piteous return. Then the people left their coverts and came down to the shore, and each scrupulously confined himself to taking up what had belonged to him. Harmless on the wet sand lay a corpse with the old woman's web in its hand ; her lameness made her late, and she was among the last to recover her property. " O cruelest of men," she said to the dead sailor, " yesterday I asked you and you would not hear me ; I asked my lord and patron, and he has heard me. Now you give up unwittingly the web you stole most wittingly ; now you pay in death the penalty you deserved to pay when alive, because you despised the Saint in me." The monk draws a conclusion to this effect : let no one think the Saints ever turn their ears from the desire of the poor ;

they only delay in order to answer their prayers more wonderfully. Such was a monkish doctrine in the Middle Ages ; what wonder the poor so loved the monks ?

## THE POOR IN THE MIDDLE AGES.

### I.

It is the Past ye worship ; ye do well,—  
If the sweet dues of reverence which ye pay  
Be equably disposed, nor lean one way  
For lack of balance in your thoughts. To spell  
The Past in its significance, to ponder,  
In the embrace of judgment, fear and love  
In the disguises of those days,—should move  
More than the weak idolatry of wonder,  
Or beauty-stricken eye : they should grow part  
Of the outgoings of your daily heart ;—  
And be not scared by show of kings and knights,  
As if those times were in such gauds embraced ;  
Remember that the People claim a Past,  
And that the Poor of Christ have lineal rights.

### II.

They, in whose hearts those mighty times have wrought  
Most deeply, have upon their aspect gazed  
As on an eclipse, with their eye upraised  
Through the subduing mean of sombre thought.  
And then it is a very fearful vision  
To see the uncounted Poor, who strayed forlorn  
As an untended herd, with natures worn  
To heartlessness through every-day collision  
With arrogance and wrong. Proud knights, fair dames,  
And all the pomp of old chivalric names,  
Fade, like a mimic show, from off the past ;  
And to the Christian's eye ungathered flowers  
Of suffering meekly borne, in lowliest bowers,  
With solemn life fill in the populous waste.

Such are the thoughts which a catholic may well have when he is humbly venturing to interpret the ways of God, pleading with people to have reverent thoughts about things which God *may* have used, and so are sacred evermore, and trying to win their love to all the benign and humanizing functions of the Church, even to such old realities and local blessings as Saint Oswin's Peace.

## THE LIFE OF

# St. Ebba,

VIRGIN AND ABBESS, A.D. 683.

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THE royal house of Northumbria was fertile in Saints. St. Edwin and St. Oswald, St. Oswin and St. Ebba, and then that Saint, dedicated in her cradle, the blessed Abbess Elfleda, were all kinsfolk. It would be interesting, on an extensive view of the history of the Saints, to see how in one age one particular class of society, and in another age a different class, furnished the Church with Saints. At one time royalty seemed the chief fountain, as prolific as the episcopate itself; at another time doctors were given to the Church, not luminary after luminary, but many together as if one called out the other: another while the Saints are found mostly to have sanctified themselves in pastoral and parochial labors;<sup>1</sup> then again they are hermits in the woods and caves, or such

<sup>1</sup> This has been especially the case in the later ages of the Church, and is, perhaps, an index of not a very favorable or healthy state of things. Most of those for whose beatification processes are now forming are parish or missionary priests: it is long since the Church canonized a doctor, so that the Jesuits may well have wished to have their gentle-spirited Bellarmine among the publicly honored Saints if so it might have been. The title of Doctor has been loudly claimed for St. Alphonso Liguori; surely most unreasonably. Expertness and erudition in the authorities of Moral Theology can hardly establish that claim for any one; and whoever reads St. Alphonso's polemical and dogmatical treatises will see that the title of Doctor can hardly belong

as have climbed the heights of heroic penance in the religious orders, or such as have divined the wants of their times and been themselves the founders of new communities. Then again at another season by some mysterious impulse the Church lengthens her cords and pushes out her boundaries here and there, and a band of missionaries swell the noble army of martyrs or of confessors. Now, without putting out of sight the blessed Paraclete who dwells within the Church and moves her as He listeth and causes that all her motions are mysterious and imperfectly comprehended, we may find some reasons why this should be so ; and at any rate draw one lesson from that striking feature of the sacred history of the Saxon Heptarchy ; for the numerous royal Saints which adorn it do certainly give it a very marked and special character. The lesson is this, that high station and worldly grandeur only or chiefly produce Saints, when such station and grandeur do of themselves involve hardship, suffering and insecurity ; so that it must be suffering, either imposed by God, or suffering self-imposed, whereby men are sanctified. And it is important to note this whenever we can ; because, though one would think it written as with a sunbeam on the pages of the New Testament, an age of luxury, domestic peace and social comforts would fain denounce the bare enunciation of it as a heresy which—strange perversion of words !—brings to nought the doctrine of the *Cross*.

As in primitive times the bishop's throne did but raise a man more into the view of his persecutors, so in

to that blessed Saint, whose seraphic heart was best outpoured upon the Passion, the Nativity, and Sacramental Presence of our Lord, and the honor of His ever-virgin Mother. It is said the Congregation have refused the claim which the Redemptorists set up for their holy founder.



the seventh century in England to be a prince or a princess was only to be more liable to vicissitude and a disturbed life than the humbler ranks of people were. Exile, deposition and murder were the foremost retinue of a king, and of course his wife and children, his brothers and sisters, shared his changeful fortunes. But of all the members of the royal households the princesses seem to have been in the most unfavorable position. Not only was the weakness of their sex to confront the rough manners of the times, but they were looked upon for the most part as means of consolidating and extending power by being given in marriage to other princes, pagan it might be, or ruthless and profligate even though Christian by name. Thus, if a royal maiden wished to dedicate herself to holy virginity, she became at once, as the world counts things, useless to her family ; a means of influence was wasted ; her father or her brother had an alliance the less, if she was allowed to take the veil. And yet it was under these very circumstances that the Saxon abbesses, the wise spiritual mothers of our first monasteries, were mostly of royal blood ; and in the sackcloth of penance, not with the patronage of power, our queens were nursing mothers to the Saxon Church. One of these holy abbesses was St. Ebba, of Coldingham, the scanty notices of whose hidden life we are now to put together.

St. Ebba was the daughter of king Ethelfrid, and the sister of St. Oswald and half-sister of king Oswy. Of her early life nothing whatever is known except that from her infancy she was very religiously disposed, and averse to the pomps and pleasures which her rank opened out to her. Doubtless the example of her brother St. Oswald, and the conversation of St. Aidan during that holy prelate's visits to the court, went far to aid the work of divine

grace within her soul. But the ruling desire of her heart was to consecrate herself as a virgin to the perpetual service of her heavenly Spouse. This was, says the author of her life,<sup>2</sup> in an age when persons of high birth esteemed their nobility to consist principally in the humble service of our Lord, and those were most highly exalted, who with greatest submission undertook the Cross of Christ. At that time innumerable congregations both of men and women were sprinkled through the whole island, severally embracing the spiritual warfare of our Lord. Yea, sometimes in the same place persons of both sexes, men and virgins, under the government of one spiritual father, or one spiritual mother, armed with the sword of the Spirit, did exercise the combats of chastity against the powers of darkness, enemies thereto. The institute and practice of these was imitated by St. Ebba, who for the love she bore to the Son of God even in the flower of her youth contemned whatsoever was great or desirable in the world. She preferred the service of our Lord before secular nobility, spiritual poverty before riches, and voluntary abjection before honors. For though descended from royal parents, yet by faith she overcame the world ; by virtues, beauty ; and by spiritual graces, her own sex.

When it has pleased God to inspire any of His servants to attempt some great thing for His sake, His Providence for the most part so orders it that some temptation shall intervene to try the strength and heartiness of the resolution. If the temptation is overcome, so much the higher place does His servant take ; and if the resolution gives way in the trial, there is often mercy in it even then : for men, especially when entering on a course of penance, will attempt things which in them it

<sup>2</sup> Translated in Cressy, xviii. 14.

is immodest to attempt, and betrays an inadequate sense of their former demerits ; and it seems better to fail in carrying out a holy resolution than to carry it out and then apostatize from the state of life to which it has solemnly committed us. The most marked temptations of the Saints have generally been contemporary with the signal acts of virtue which afterwards rendered their memory dear to the Church. Thus the youthful Ebba was not allowed quietly to satisfy her thirst for holy virginity ; the dazzling offers of the world must come and try her strength ; the snare of seeking what is now-a-days called a more extended sphere of usefulness must tempt the simplicity of her self-renunciation. Alas ! what a miserable, dwarfish standard of religious practice do these smooth words bring about among us now ! The highest notion we are allowed to have of rank, wealth and mental powers is that they should be exercised to the full as means of influence for good ends. The world understands this and does not quarrel with the doctrine. But where is there about this teaching that foolishness in men's eyes which must ever mark the science of the Cross ? Self-abjection surely is the highest of all oblations : to forget the world or to hate it are better far than to work for it. One is the taste of ordinary Christians : the other the object of the Saints. We read of St. Arsenius that when he became a monk he studied to the utmost to conceal his immense learning, and was ever humbling himself to seek spiritual advice from the most simple of his brethren. Rodriguez remarks of St. Jerome, that though of noble birth there is not so much as a covert allusion to it in all his voluminous writings, full as they are of autobiography : and the flights of the holy abbot Pinuphius<sup>3</sup> from what would be considered

<sup>3</sup> Cassian, Inst. iv. 30.

his sphere of duty, however improper objects for our imitation, exhibit a *view* widely different from that whose tyrannous reign would now cramp the energies of good men and keep them in an ineffective mediocrity from which the world has nothing to fear.

The temptation of St. Ebba came from the offer of a splendid marriage. Her suitor was no less a person than Edan the king of the Scotch. Of course the inducements were many ; the strengthening of her family, the almost unlimited means of doing good and serving the Church, the religious advantages of being among the Scotch at that time, whose fervent zeal and purity were famous, and to whose usages her brother Oswy was almost bigotedly attached. The vulgar allurements of power and royalty would not touch her ; and for the other motives the simplicity of a self-renouncing spirit was too much. She rejected her royal suitor, and from the hands of St. Finan, Bishop of Lindisfarne, she received the veil in token that she was now married once for all to a heavenly Spouse. In proportion as a Christian receives any gift from the Lord, does he feel a growing desire to impart it unto others : this it is which breeds that love of souls, whose crowning point is martyrdom. We read that Ebba was not content to dedicate her own virginity to Christ, but that she longed to draw with her a band of virgins into the same divine espousals. Her brother Oswy furthered her project, and with his assistance she founded a nunnery in Durham, on the river Darwent, at a place still called Ebchester.

As the royal house of Northumbria may almost be called a family of Saints, and as it was by Oswy's aid that Ebba founded her first nunnery, it may be allowed us to take this opportunity of saying something of that king. Considering his deep repentance, and the signal

services he afterwards rendered to the Church, it is painful to keep his reign in the background, and leave his memory under the dark shadow which the death of St. Oswin casts upon it. It would indeed be contrary to the charity of the Saints that their lives should bring up Oswy's atrocious crime, and put out of view his penitence, and the virtues of his after-life. It is natural we should wish to adorn, so far as truth will allow, the chronicles of our Saxon kings, when, besides many Saints, seven kings before Ceolwulph laid down the purple for the coarse garment of the ascetic monk.

It is not an uncommon thing both in history and in life to see a man working towards a much coveted end by every means, right or wrong ; and when the station is gained, the ambition satisfied, and the hunger of sin stayed, the man's nature seems to right itself, as though the disturbing force were removed ; or perhaps the very responsibility of his office, as has been the case with some bishops, acts as a sort of moral stimulus, and makes him discharge with nobility the duties of a station which he arrived at through ignoble ways and a mean ambition. But this sort of silent growing change is something very different from Christian penitence : it wants its roughness, its completeness, its self-revenge ; and the early Saxon character would either have gone on from bad to worse, or have changed for the better in a more real and Christian way. So it was with Oswy, when he was roused from that dream of ambition or of angry passions which brought about the murder of St. Oswin. He seems to have become a real, hearty penitent, and to have devoted himself in every way to serve the holy Church. It was chiefly through Oswy that the Middle Angles were converted to the faith ; for when the young king Peada came to sue for the hand

of Alcfleda, his natural daughter, Oswy refused to give her to a pagan, and persuaded Peada to be instructed in the faith : which he cordially embraced, being urged in addition by the friendship of Oswy's son Alfrid who had married his sister Kyneburga, herself a Saint. Neither was Oswy less successful in re-establishing the Gospel among the East Saxons, who had exiled their bishop Mellitus. Sigebert their king was closely united to Oswy in the bonds of friendship, and was accustomed to pay frequent visits at the Northumbrian court. Oswy lost no opportunity of urging upon him the excellency of the Christian faith. He unveiled the stupid errors of idolatry, and spoke of the spiritual majesty of God and the terrors of His future Judgment, until Sigebert's heart was touched, and he received the sacrament of Baptism from the hands of St. Finan, and from Oswy the holy bishop Cedd, who accompanied him into his kingdom. Oswy's piety was again displayed on the occasion of his victory over king Penda. He consecrated his infant daughter Elfleda to the perpetual service of Christ ; he also set aside twelve small estates where twelve bands of monks were always to reside, and pray for the peace of the nation. The king moreover took a warm interest in ecclesiastical matters, and was devotedly attached to the Scotch usages, as we learn from the part he took in the disputes between St. Colman and St. Wilfrid : though he was in the end completely convinced by St. Wilfrid's reasons, and gave up his former opinion in a way which reflected the greatest credit upon himself. He seems to have been a man so completely in earnest, that he entered into the love and reverence for the Holy See, with a zeal equal to that which he had before shown towards the Scotch usages in which he had been brought up. He sent Wighard to Rome to be consecrated arch-

bishop by pope Vitalian ; and, Wighard dying before his consecration, the holy father addressed a letter to the king : and finally, when Oswy died, he was preparing to quit his kingdom and go on pilgrimage to Rome and end his days among the holy places, with St. Wilfrid for his companion. He was buried in Whitby abbey, and the opinion which men had of his sanctity is sufficiently shown by his being mentioned in the English Martyrology on the 15th of February.

From this digression, which seemed but an act of equity to her half-brother, we may now return to St. Ebba. How long she stayed at the newly founded nunnery of Ebchester we do not know. It appears however that for some reason or other she left it, and founded the famous double monastery of Coldingham in Berwickshire, where two distinct communities, of men and women, lived under her single government as abbess. It was in this monastery that Ebba received St. Etheldreda of Ely, and taught her the monastic discipline ; and the very fact that such an eminent Saint was formed under her spiritual guidance gives us some idea of the wisdom, discretion and holiness of Ebba herself. Indeed we are told that the whole kingdom regarded Ebba as a spiritual mother, and that the reputation of her sanctity was spread far and wide. And one fact is recorded which of itself speaks volumes. It is well known that St. Cuthbert carried the jealousy of intercourse with women, characteristic of all the Saints, to a very extraordinary pitch. It appeared as though he could say with the patriarch Job, "I made a covenant with mine eyes ; why then should I think upon a maid ?" And for many ages after females were not admitted into his sanctuary. Yet such was the reputation of St. Ebba's sanctity, and the spiritual wisdom of her discourse, that

St. Bede informs us that when she sent messengers to the man of God, desiring him to come to her monastery, he went and stopped several days, in conversation with her, going out of the gates at nightfall and spending the hours of darkness in prayer, either up to his neck in the water, or in the chilly air.

It would seem that in the case of Coldingham the plan of a double community did not at first succeed. It is obvious that St. Ebba would be compelled to entrust a great portion of the government to inferior officers who were males. Anyhow the monastery, even under her rule, fell into such a state of lukewarm remissness as to provoke the Divine vengeance. We cannot for a moment suppose that the holy mother either caused or countenanced such a state of things, but somehow or other it was maintained in spite of her ; indeed they managed to keep her in ignorance of it. Meanwhile it pleased God to reveal to the austere and devout St. Adamnan the future destruction of the whole monastery by fire ; yet even this awful judgment carried with it an attestation to the sanctity of Ebba : for it was promised that this great judgment should not be in her time. St. Adamnan did not venture at first to reveal this sad secret to his abbess. His mind was burdened with it, as the young Samuel's with the knowledge of Eli's gloomy fortunes. But among his brother monks it was too much for him to keep silence from good words ; his heart grew hot within him, and at last he spake with his tongue. The matter soon came to the ears of the abbess. She sent for St. Adamnan, and enquired minutely of the vision, asking why he had not made her acquainted with it sooner. He said he had concealed it in order to spare her the affliction, and that furthermore it had been made

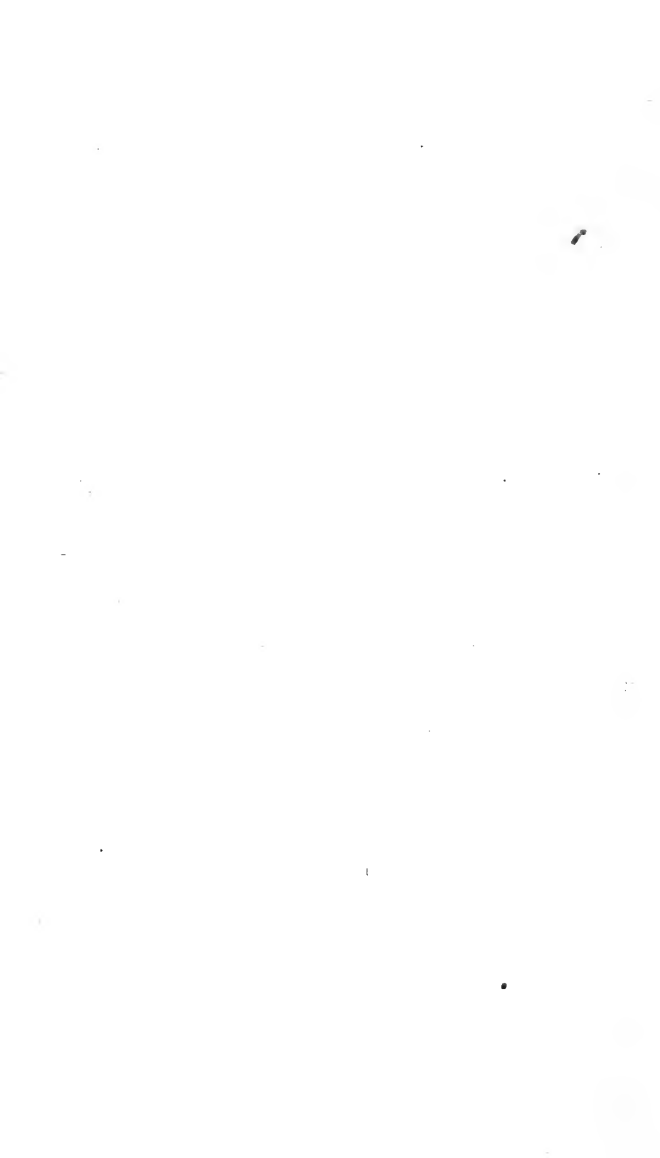


known to him that this ruin would not happen in her days. The very knowledge of the revelation produced a temporary return to strictness ; but after the death of the holy abbess the prophecy was fulfilled. Yet was it rather a fiery baptism than a fierce destruction to that holy house ; for the chastity of St. Ebba of the seventh century seems to have descended upon her namesake, the sainted abbess of Coldingham in the ninth, whose daring piety suggested to her nuns that they should all disfigure and mutilate their features with a razor, when the Danes were coming upon them, in order to quench the brutal lusts of their ferocious assailants, and so preserve their chastity.

Doubtless, amid the peaceful exercises of her monastic home, Ebba's declining years were saddened by the knowledge of what was coming upon her beloved Coldingham. Added to this there would be the harassing suspicion of a continued laxity which it was difficult to trace out, and eradicate from her community : and the Saints have at once such acquaintance with themselves, and such a clear vision of the real hatefulness of sin, that they seem to ordinary Christians to become untruthful in their excess of self-reproach. Ebba would no doubt be full of self-accusation. She would consider *her* sins, *her* misgovernment, *her* want of vigilance, to be the cause of this laxity. She would dwell upon her own demerits, and by a kind of natural effort, such as humility is wont to put forth, she would remove out of sight the heavenly intimation of the delayed judgment, and refuse to be consoled by it. But if she wept the more, and prayed the more, if she redoubled her austerities till her cell was stained with the blood of the secret discipline, she would *act* not the less but the more energetically for her increased penance. Age, which even

to Saints is often allotted as a time of rest, a tranquil antechamber of the new world so soon to be entered, was no interval of rest to her. A long, weary, thankless task was hers. She had to fight with a corrupt community, to struggle with untoward nuns and stubborn monks, to be baffled yet not to faint, repulsed but returning to the attack, to keep the heart of the mother while discharging the vindictive office of the judge. Endless were the things which exercised her weary vigilance,—cold or hurried recitation of the office, irreverent celebration of the mass, want of plainness in the refectory, languor in the manual labor, evasions of holy obedience, the spirit of self-seeking, which amidst the bare walls, unfurnished cells and hard life of a monastery finds nutriment enough. So went the years of Ebba's age: not in tranquil meditation on the Song of Songs, not in the spiritual delights of cloistered seclusion, not in the gentle ascents of mystic contemplation, not in rapture, repose or the sweet forestallings of heavenly espousals, but wrestling with the evil and the foul spirits who possessed her monastery, bruised and wounded and wearied, and meeting death while yet covered with the dust and blood of battle, and the contest's unseemly disarray, and victory not yet certified. Strange harbour for a gentle nun was that old age of hers! Yet was she more than conqueror. She sanctified herself in that unseasonable strife, for it was mercifully sent her to trade with and multiply her merits. And if judgment still came on Coldingham, who knows what good she may have done to single souls, how many became penitents and passed away in peace before the fire came, or how great the remnant was of those who suffered the loss yet held them fast by God, took the judgment and glorified Him in it, and grew in the spirit

of compunction? Who knows if the holy priest who told St. Bede of St. Adamnan's prophecy was not one of those with whom the abbess travailed in birth a second time till Christ was formed in them? Certainly it is recorded that partly through the revelation given to St. Adamnan, and partly through the judicious rigors of the holy abbess, a great though not lasting reformation took place at Coldingham, and that she did not live to witness its second degeneracy: though its future strictness and purity after its punishment may have been earned by the blessed intercession of its sainted foundress, when she was called to her reward. "Full of virtues and good works she departed to her heavenly Spouse" on the 25th of August 683 or 84, about four years before St. Cuthbert. She was buried in her own monastery; miracles were wrought through her intercession, and apparitions of the blessed abbess were vouchsafed, which are recorded in her life, and other tokens given, whereby the Church was certified of her sanctity, and enrolled her among the Saxon Saints.



THE LIFE OF

**St. Adamnan,**

MONK OF COLDINGHAM, A.D. 689.

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OF this blessed Saint and the heights of his heroic penance very little is known, but enough to make us wish to know more. A brief notice of him will naturally follow the life of St. Ebba. There are, however, two remarks suggested by his life, on which it may not be amiss to say a few words, considering the practical end which these memoirs of the Saints have in view.

First we may observe that what little is known of St. Adamnan is connected with the decay of fervor in the monastery of Coldingham. To a pious person, surely, no matter what his opinions may be, the degeneracy of religious institutes and orders must be a humbling and distressing subject for reflection. Yet by literary men of later days, and especially by protestants and other heretics, this degeneracy has been laid hold of with almost a desperate eagerness either for the purpose of sneering at religion altogether, or vilifying the holy Roman Church, or discountenancing the strictness of catholic morals. Now let it be admitted fully that this degeneracy is a fact, and that it has taken place in many instances almost incredibly soon after the first fervor of a new institute, always excepting, as truth compels us, the most noble and glori-

ous company of St. Ignatius, which, next to the visible Church, may perhaps be considered the greatest standing miracle in the world. History certainly bears witness to this decay ; but it must not be stated in the exaggerated way usual to many. It was not till the end of the tenth century that the decline of monastic fervor began to lead to abuses and corruptions ; and for at least six centuries what almost miraculous perfection, heavenly love, self-crucifying austerities, mystical union with God, and stout-hearted defence of the orthodox faith reigned among the quietly succeeding generations of the Egyptian cenobites and solitaries ? In the thirteenth century again the Church interfered, and at her touch, as if with the rod of Moses, there sprung forth those copious streams which satisfied the extraordinary thirst of Christendom in those times. The revered names of St. Dominic and St. Francis may remind us of what that age did. And when was the Church of Rome ever so great, ever so obviously the mother of Saints, or when did she ever so wonderfully develope the hidden life within her, as in the sixteenth century ? St. Ignatius, St. Francis Xavier, St. Francis Borgia, St. Francis of Sales, St. Philip Neri, St. Felix of Cantalice, and many others, sprung almost simultaneously from the bosom of a Church so utterly corrupt and anti-Christian that part of mankind deemed it necessary to fall off from her lest their souls should not be saved ! Stated then fairly and moderately, let the fact of monastic degeneracy be admitted, and what follows ? Is it anything more than an illustration of the catholic doctrine of original sin ? Is it a fit or decent subject of triumph to miserable sinners who share personally in the corruption of their fellows ? When such boastings are introduced into historical

panegyrics of constitutions, parliaments, monarchies, republics, federacies and the like, what is it but an *a fortiori* argument against such mere worldly institutions? If a company of men or women leave their homes, enter upon a joyless life of poverty, singleness and obedience, to work, to beg, to pray, to sing, to watch, to fast, to scourge themselves, and behold! in a century or so, they degenerate and abandon the strictness of their institute, what must become of a corporation gathered together for gain and for aggrandizement? Either it must grow corrupt in a still shorter time, or, as the other alternative, having been corrupt from the beginning, as being secular, it will proceed to such an extremity of wickedness that nations, or kings, or people, as the case may be, will rise and tread it out of the earth as something to be endured no longer. Surely there is something stupid, as well as unmanly, in this fierce exultation over the degeneracy of monastic orders. Roman law, the feudal system, chivalry, the municipalities of the middle ages—what light must such a course of reasoning throw on these things, so often set forth and illustrated with all the splendors of historical eloquence? One would imagine that to be a really philosophically historian heart and feeling were required, a strong sense of fellowship with our kind, a humbling acknowledgment of what is evil, and above all an assiduous detection of what is, through God's mercy, honorable, pure and good; and what a different object would the Church of the dark ages be in a history written on principles like these?

But readers as well as writers have often exhibited a strange delight in these labored invectives against monastic degeneracy; and this is very natural. It would be very unpleasant for us to pray so many hours,

to get up at nights, to fare badly, to sleep on boards, to be poor, to have somebody else's will to do instead of our own, to spend summer days amid the fumes of crowded hospitals, to wear hair-shirts and so forth ; and we cannot help feeling a little angry with people who did so ; because, however clear it may be that it was all part and parcel of Romish corruption, there is a kind of lingering irritable feeling within us that there was, on the face of it to say the least, something more evangelical about such a life than about days spent in the luxurious houses, the costly furniture, varied meals, literary pastimes, elegant entertainments, smooth conventions, of modern society, notwithstanding the Sunday sermon, the carriage, the stove, the cushion, and the pew—our admonitions of the unseen world, our demonstrations of faith in the truth of the Gospel. Well—but let *readers* think a little. The monastic orders grew very corrupt ; yet still it may not follow that there is any inexorable necessity of leading a *comfortable* life. The Dominicans began to eat flesh ! The Carmelites to put on shoes ! The Cluniacs to wear leather garments and to have more than two dressed dishes ! But supposing all these things were declinations from a rule they were bound to keep, did they, even the congregations which remained unreformed, did they subside into an easy indulgent life, and put the awkward precepts of the Gospel out of sight as we do ? Do people, when they read of an order declining from its rule, and moralize on *it*, rather than on *themselves*, as readers are unhappily prone to do, do they remember that in that *fallen* monastery were nocturns, and the diurnal hours, and fasts, and vigils, and silence, and celibacy, and sundry other very mortifying observances ? A sandalled Carmelite cannot



be brought to the level of modern comfort, self-indulgence, or even of idleness, generally considered the exclusive characteristic of a monk. Take the Benedictine congregations in all their changes, from Bernon of Gigni to John de Rancé of La Trappe, and the life which the easiest among them led was something far more penitential, austere, devoted and unearthly, than what we should deem the very heights of a rigid perfection. It were better to take shame to ourselves : the life of the least strict order would be, it is feared, an impracticable standard of holiness for us, accustomed to the hourly exercise of freedom and selfwill.

It is quite conceivable, however, that a catholic reader should feel pained and in a degree perplexed when the lives of the Saints bring him into immediate contact with any flagrant instance of monastic degeneracy, as in this case of Coldingham while under the government of St. Ebba. But it does not follow that a state of laxity has grown up in the abbey while under the rule of the Saint. It may many times be an evil of old standing, too far gone to admit of remedy, and perhaps even brought to a head by the energetic measures of reform attempted by the superior. And again the horror and hatred of sin produced in an earnest and sensitive mind by the sight of degeneracy may not unfrequently have been God's instrument in exciting that eminent spirit of compunction which distinguishes the Saints who have lived amidst such unhappy circumstances, and at the same time the decay of fervor among those around them and their own inability to stem the gathering torrent may have been the special trials designed for their sanctification. St. Benedict might have set his affections too strongly on his beloved abbey of Monte Cassino, and we know how he

was tried by the distressing foreknowledge of its destruction. In the same way many of the circulars addressed by St. Alphonso Liguori to his congregation of Redemptorists exhibit not unfrequently almost an anguish of spirit at the creeping in of any little custom which threatened to mar the perfectness of poverty and self-renunciation, such as using carriages on mission, paying any distinctive attention to the father who preached the evening sermon, putting mouldings above the doors of their cells, and the like. Moreover the whole history of Robert and the monks of Molesme shows that a community bent on laxity can always be more than a match for the abbot, no matter whether judicious gentleness or judicious severity come uppermost in his character. Innocent the Third was foiled over and over again in trying to compel the Roman nuns to keep cloister; and when at length three cardinals effected it, it was only through the help of the wonder-working Dominic. Thus a corrupt or degenerate community under the governance of a Saint does not afford any ground for imputing feebleness or fault to the superior; it may be in the one case the trial which perfects his holiness, or in the other the very originating cause, speaking humanly, of his greater strictness and thirst after perfection.

We have not forgotten St. Adamnan all this while. His being known to us only through the degeneracy of the house of which he was a son has led us to make this first prefatory remark on the subject of monastic degeneracy altogether. We have still another observation to make, but it is wholly connected with the Saint himself.

We started by saying that very little is known of St. Adamnan; but it so happens that that little is

of a peculiarly instructive nature to ourselves, giving us a lesson where perhaps we most of all need it, namely, by illustrating the character of true Christian repentance. Sacramental Confession does not exist among us *as a system* : penance has no tribunals in the Anglican Church. Of course many consequences result from this, such as that it makes our ecclesiastical system so startlingly unlike anything primitive that the long prevalent arrogation to ourselves of a primitive model seems an almost unaccountable infatuation. This is perhaps not of paramount importance to a community which has a duty nearer home and more at hand, that is, reconciliation with the present catholic Church. But those consequences of wanting Confession which have to do with the character of our practical religion, and the peril and safety of our souls, *are* of paramount importance. Now one of the features of modern religion (we are not speaking of catholic countries), which would have struck the ancient Christians as a perplexity, is this : an immense body of baptized Christians lead the years of early manhood in negligence, irreverence, nay even in the mortal sins of unchastity ; dissipation is a weary thing in its own nature, and in time such men grow more staid, more outwardly moral, more decorously respectful towards the ordinances of religion ; they enter on their professions, marry, settle in life, and by an imperceptible process slide into good Christian people. There is no violent sundering between their past lives and their new ones ; no strongly marked penances ; no suspicion that penances are needed ; no notion of the self-revenge of godly sorrow ; they think, and people say it for them, that everybody has a certain amount of wildness which he must run through ; that there

is nothing shocking if only a man run through it in youth, and then all is as it should be; with no other change than such as time and selfishness will naturally bring about, the dissolute, unchaste youth becomes all that we can desire and esteem as a professional married man. These smooth transmutations in baptized persons not excommunicated would surely have been a perfect puzzle to a man of the second century, till he came to understand them; and then as surely they would have been a perfect abomination, so very little would they meet with his ideas of Christian repentance. What would have been his criticism on the ecclesiastical system which presented such a phenomenon it may be as well not to conjecture. Of course it is clear that sacramental Confession would soon purge the atmosphere of such phenomena. To those, then, who will receive it, St. Adamnan may read a lesson on the entireness, completeness, energy, and enduring self-revenge of penance; the more so as this is all we know about him, except that God seems to have set His seal upon the blessed Saint's austerity, by favoring him with the revelation of the tremendous judgment about to fall on his brother monks of Coldingham.

St. Adamnan of Coldingham was a Scot by birth. It is not known how old he was when he took the monastic habit; but we are informed that during his youth he had committed some mortal sin of a very grievous kind. It is spoken of by St. Bede as a single action, not as an habitual course of wickedness; and therefore putting it at the worst as a deed of bloodshed, and comparing the circumstances of his times with the circumstances of ours, it can hardly have been so bad as a long deliberate indulged habit of unchastity in young persons enjoying the advantages of a Christian

education. It can hardly have been so bad, one would think, in the eye of the Church, and as a single act it can not have had that utterly debasing influence over his whole nature which a sinful habit must inevitably exercise. However, it pleased God to give Adamnan deep and keen sentiments of compunction, apparently as soon as the fever of temptation had subsided and he had come to a right mind. He is described as being most "direfully horrified" at his sin, especially when he thought of the intolerable strictness of the judgment to come.

What is the first step which a rightly instructed Christian must take, when it pleases God to give him the grace of compunction? Clearly he must resort to the consolations of the Gospel and the merits of the Saviour as laid up in the sacrament of penance. The "albs of his baptism" have become filthy; great are the mercies of God that the sackcloth of the penitent is left for him. Adamnan with befitting humility repaired to a priest whom he judged competent to instruct him in the way of salvation, and begged to learn in what way he could best avoid the wrath to come. When the priest had heard his confession, he said, "A great wound requires a careful healing; you must therefore be as instant as you can in fasts, psalms and prayers, in order that *by preoccupying the Face of the<sup>1</sup> Lord in confession*, you may come to find Him propitious." Adamnan, youth as he was, saw nothing stern in the unworldly life laid down for him; the horrors of a stained conscience had quite eclipsed the gay temptations of opening manhood, and the sunny prospects of the almost untried world. Doubtless it was not altogether the expected fulfilment of boyhood's

<sup>1</sup> Ps. xciv. Vulg.

day-dreams ; but the fetters of sin—they were galling him, and everything seemed light in comparison of them. He answered as a young man was likely to do, readily and generously, yet with something of forwardness ; it was not unlike the answer of the royal-hearted brothers that would have the right and the left of their Blessed Lord, and who did through His grace, and acceptance of their forwardness, come to sit on heavenly thrones. “I am a youth,” said Adamnan boldly, “and I am vigorous in body ; whatever you shall impose upon me, I can easily endure to go through with it, if only I may be saved in the day of the Lord ; nay, I could do it though I were to pass the whole night in prayer standing, and spend the whole week in abstinence.” Many repentances begin as promisingly as this, with a good hatred of half-measures ; perhaps that so few go on as well may be owing in part to the want of intelligent confessors and directors.

Adamnan fortunately had met with a wise and holy priest. He satisfied his penitent’s craving for austerity, while he restrained what was but impulse in it. “It is too much,” said the good man, “for you to go the whole week without food ; it is enough for you to fast two or three days in it ; do this for the present : I will return to you in a short time, and then I will explain to you more fully what you are to do, and how long your penance is to last.” Having then described to him the method of his penance (*mensura pœnitendi*) the priest departed, and Adamnan began his new life. Meanwhile some sudden business called his confessor over to Ireland, of which country he was a native, and there he died. Adamnan seems to have regarded this event as a token that it was God’s will his penance should last his whole lifetime, and he ever after regarded the priest’s

injunction to go on till he came again, as a sacred command. He led a life of the strictest continence, took the monastic habit and vows, often spent entire nights in prayer, and ate only on Thursdays and Sundays, taking no sustenance of any kind during the rest of the week. This very austere life which was at first sustained by the fear of the Divine Wrath became in a while easy through the sweetness of the Divine Love, while he was cheered by looking out for the promised reward in the life to come. It did not seem to him servile to ponder his reward ; he did not refine upon his religious feelings, but loving God with all his heart and soul, and shewing forth the reality of that love by the self-chastisements of penance, he could say with the psalmist, *Inclinavi cor meum ad faciendas justificationes tuas in æternum, propter retributionem.*

Such was the repentance of Adamnan : such was the repentance of a Christian in the seventh century : and though some may say that the doctrine of penance was very corrupt in St. Adamnan's days, there certainly were a great many things in it strikingly resembling St. Paul's carefulness, clearing of themselves, indignation, fear, vehement desire, zeal and revenge, whereof he speaks to the Corinthians. There was plainly a new self and an old self in Adamnan, cognizable by himself and his acquaintances ; and it is the want of this which makes us fear so sadly for the unsoundness of that quiet gradual complacent change which lifts the character with years (as if time itself were a sacrament) from the impure dissolute youth to the sober husband, moral citizen and kind neighbour. Time *has* a healing power, but its healing is not sacramental. We are not saying that penance is not true penance if it falls short of St. Adamnan's, or that it must needs

take the peculiar shape of his austerities. There are ordinary Christians who serve God acceptably without being called to the eminences of the Saints. Penance may be true penance, and yet have none of that heroicity in it which the promoter of the faith would demand if canonization were claimed for the penitent. It is the substantial, real, vigorous doctrine implied in such a penance, illustrated, embodied and expounded by it, which we would fain recall. If men would only learn to humble themselves by Confession, faith in the ecclesiastical absolutions would grow in them as a matter of course, and the moral effects of Confession on their own characters would be found more momentous than they could have conceived beforehand.

For how many years St. Adamnan led this austere life we are not told, nor how long he was an inmate of the cells of Coldingham. But St. Bede says that it was for a long time. Now it happened after this long time that Adamnan and another monk had to make a journey, possibly on some business connected with the monastery. Their business finished, they returned to Coldingham. At some distance the noble abbey with its towers and tall roofs and manifold pile came into view, and at the sight of the lofty buildings Adamnan began to weep bitterly; for we read of him before this that God had endowed him with the gift of tears, in all ages so characteristic of the Saints. His companion naturally demanded why a prospect, which should cheer him, on the contrary made him weep. "The time comes," replied Adamnan, "when a devouring fire shall destroy all these buildings which you see, both private and public." Probably Adamnan's reputation for sanctity was such that his words did not fall lightly to the ground among his brethren at Coldingham. At any rate his compa-



nion on this occasion seems to have questioned him no further, but as soon as they arrived at the monastery he related them to St. Ebba the abbess.

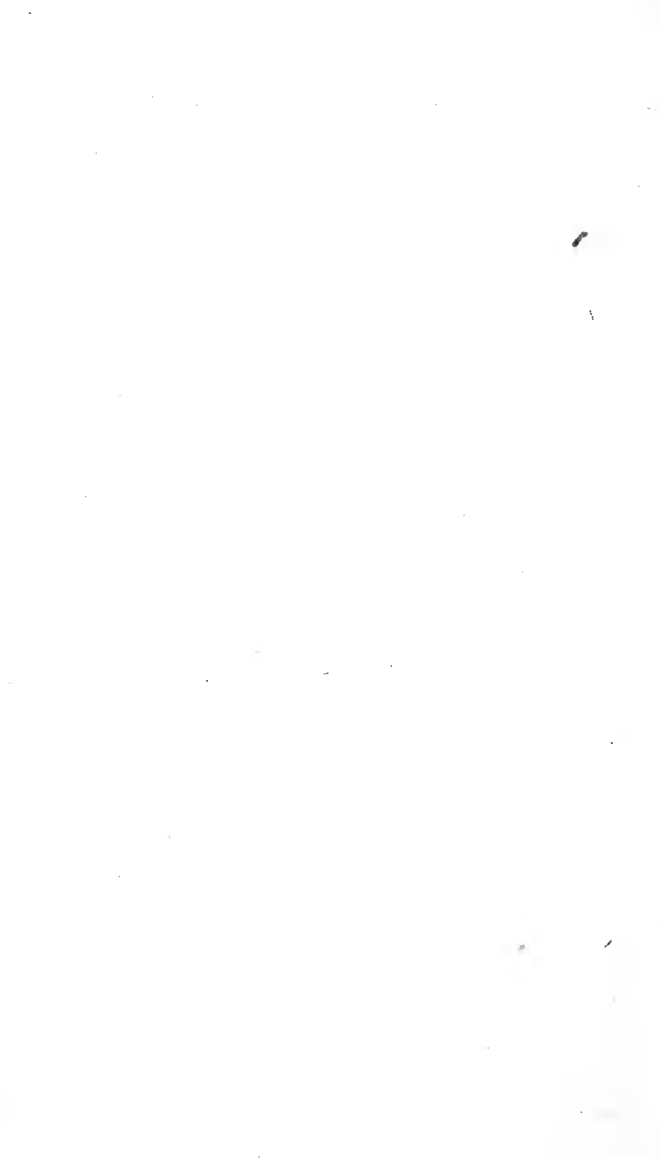
St. Ebba was greatly troubled within herself at this disquieting relation ; she sent for Adamnan, and questioned him strictly as to the meaning of his words. The holy monk replied as follows : “ Not long since while I was spending the night in watching and psalmody, suddenly I saw a person whom I did not know standing by me ; when I was as it were terrified by his presence, he told me not to fear, and speaking to me in a familiar tone he said, ‘ You do well in not spending in sleep this quiet time of night, but in being instant in watches and prayers.’ I answered him that I had much need to be instant in salutary watches that I might sedulously deprecate the divine anger for my wanderings. He added, ‘ What you say is true ; you and many have need to redeem your sins by good works, and when they cease from the labors of temporal things, then to toil the more readily through the appetite of eternal goods ; but very few indeed do so : I have but now visited and examined the whole monastery in order, I have inspected the cells and the beds, and I have found none out of the whole number, except yourself, occupied about the health of his soul ; but all, men and women alike, are either slothfully asleep in bed, or watch in order to sin. Nay, the very cells that were built for praying or reading are now turned into resorts for eating, drinking, talking, and other enticements. The virgins, too, dedicated to God, put off the reverence of their profession, and whenever they have time, take pains in weaving fine robes either to adorn themselves as brides to the great peril of their monastic state, or to win the admiration of strangers. Wherefore a heavy vengeance of savage fire

is deservedly prepared for this place and the inhabitants of it.’”

Such was Adamnan’s tale ; and no doubt it sounded very dreadful to the ears of the holy abbess. “Why did you not tell me of it sooner ?” she demanded. To this the monk humbly replied, “I was afraid, because of my reverence for you, as I thought you would be excessively disturbed by it ; and yet you may have this consolation, that the plague will not come in your days.”

The seventh century was not an age of sneering, natural as that facile sin is to all ages. When Adamnan’s communication with St. Ebba was known throughout the monastery, fear came upon all ; austerity, penance, self-chastisement, prayer, fast and vigil, became the order of the day, and doubtless many thought and read of Nineveh. This however was not of long continuance, and it seems in a measure to have been kept up by the example and authority of the abbess ; for we are told that after her death things relapsed into their old corrupt state, and the monks grew more and more wicked. An interval of security had elapsed, and probably Adamnan’s prophecy had come to be disbelieved. However, while the monks of Coldingham were crying peace, the destruction came. The monastery was reduced to ashes in 686, and it is said, on what authority does not appear, first that Adamnan survived the burning of Coldingham three years, dying in 689 ; and secondly, that it was in consequence of the degeneracy of Coldingham, which he attributed to its being a double monastery of monks and nuns, that St. Cuthbert made his stringent laws against women so much as coming to hear mass in the church where his monks celebrated. This is hardly likely, for, although St. Cuthbert was distinguished by an unusual jealousy on this point, a reference to the

table of penances in St. Columban's Rule will show that he was only carrying out what he had been accustomed to at Melrose and had been derived from Iona. This account of St. Adamnan's vision was told to St. Bede by Edgils, a priest who, leaving Coldingham at the fire, took up his abode in the monastery of Wearmouth, and whom St. Bede describes as his most reverend brother priest. The divine judgments are indeed mercies. Though at times God seems to cover Himself with a cloud that our prayer should not pass through, yet His compassions are new every morning. The storm broke over Coldingham, but it cleared away. When the wild Danes came, St. Ebba's monastery was still a living mother of Saints, and Adamnan, the penitent, the prophet, unforgotten.



THE LIFE OF  
**St. Bega,**

VIRGIN AND ABBESS, A.D. 650.

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ANY one climbing the brow of Hawcoat immediately to the west of Furness Abbey, and seating himself at the foot of the modern tower where the monks' chair originally was, may see one of the most magnificent views in the north of England. And if the chair of the good Camaldolese above Naples commands a prospect more beautiful, though less extensive, the view from Hawcoat will be at least more interesting to an English catholic. He is sitting on the west side of the peninsula of Furness. At his feet, supposing the tide to be high, is the estuary of the Duddon running up into the mountains till the silver gleam of the waters is lost in a purple gorge. Before him the sun is setting over the Scotch hills beyond the Solway, and through the bright haze the peaks of the Isle of Man are flushed with a deep gold. On his right are the mountains which embrace within their many arms the English lakes; the blue sea studded with white sails is on his left in front; and round the base of the shadowy Black Combe he perceives a region, comparatively flat, intervening between the roots of the mountains and the ever-foamy line of the Atlantic. It is watered by the Mite, the Irt, and the Esk, uniting in the sandlocked pool of Ravenglass,

and is striped brilliantly with yellow corn-fields and ruddy fallows, up to the very headland of St. Bees.

Such was the view which the old monks of Furness loved, and to which they came through the woody path, having erected a stone chair for the tranquil enjoyment of the scene. But Furness is a ruin, where the simplemannered Cistercians served God, and so are the aisles of the woody Calder. Still the name of Copeland Forest belongs to the region, still the uncertain legend of St. Bega hangs like a mist over the place, and still upon her holy headland is a school for Christian doctrine. The desolation of modern change has not quite trodden out all the footsteps of the catholic past.

We have now to tell the legend of St. Bees, so far as it may be told, so far as history can take cognizance of it. There seems to have been more than one St. Bega ; for if, as Alford thinks, St. Heyne, the first nun in Northumberland, and who received the veil from St. Aidan, is the same with St. Bega, then she can hardly be the Bega who succeeded St. Hilda at Hacanos, for that St. Bega died a hundred years after St. Aidan, and yet she is generally taken to be the same. Mabillon makes her to die at Hacanos, Alban Butler at Calcaria, supposed to be Tadcaster. It seems next to impossible to reconcile the chronology or conflicting statements which have come down to us, and it is therefore but right to advertise the reader that the following pages can make no claim to historical accuracy. They follow for the most part the monkish legend printed from the Cottonian MSS. (Faust. B. 4. fol. 122—139) among the Carlisle tracts ; and at any rate put the reader in possession of what St. Bega's own monks believed about their holy foundress some centuries later than her own time. The devotion to her was very great through the

north of England ; she is connected with both the western and eastern coasts, and her headland is still crowned with a religious college called after her name ; so that it is interesting at any rate to know what the monks had collected about her from the three sources which the life specifies, chronicles, authentic histories, and the tradition of trustworthy people. The monk compiled his biography for the edification of the sons of the Church ; the same end may hold good still ; and it should be remembered that if we cannot prove our facts by the usual historical evidence, neither is there anything to throw discredit upon them. The only doubt is whether we are not relating the acts of two Saints in the life of one.

Bega was the daughter of an Irish king, possibly Donald the third, possessed of great and widely spread influence in the early part of the seventh century. He was a Christian, and an earnest man to boot, and Bega was baptized as an infant, and taught in her tender years the mysteries of the faith. In very childhood God inspired her with an ardent love of holy virginity, and she seems to have been almost preserved from the pollution of impure thoughts. As a girl she avoided all public amusements, and, fearing lest idleness should prove a source of sin, she was studious to fill up the whole of her time with some employment. A weary spirit she knew to be the sleep of the soul, and praying with the psalmist, *Dormitavit anima mea præ tædio*, *confirma me in verbis Tuis*, she devoted a large portion of her time to the study of holy books ; and when her mind required relaxation she worked gold fringes, and was singularly skilful in a method of interweaving gold and jewels. While others were engaged in the pursuits and recreations of youth, she was to be found making

decorations for the church ; for as yet the worship of domestic comfort was unknown, and the broidery frame was filled with costly silks and metal threads, not for the furniture of a palace, but as frontals for the altar, or other holy purposes. If time be of all talents one of the most fearful committed to our charge, and it be still true that the righteous are scarcely saved, what are we to think of a state of things when the young females of a country should spend more than a third of their time in multiplying by frivolous industry the gay and costly adornments of private ease and luxury ? It was not so with Bega. She was busy with her embroidery and her golden fringe ; but it was for the worship of God. And therefore instead of dissipation of mind, visible in levity of conversation, she learned in her work how to have a spirit self-recollected, an aptitude for mental prayer, a carefulness of speech, and a virginal modesty which won the hearts of all who approached her.

Such was she in her girlhood ; but riper age brought fresh cares upon her. She was eminent for her beauty, and that is a fearful gift in a king's court. Offers of marriage poured in upon her from Irish and foreign princes ; the suitors sent her magnificent presents, bracelets, and earrings, and cloth of gold, and rings studded with precious stones. But all these things she counted as loss for the love of Christ, and its surpassing excellency. True it is, that as a princess she was oftentimes obliged to go about in robes adorned with gold, yet it was a self-denial to her, a mortification rather than a thing she prized, for notwithstanding this outward seeming of regal pomp, the glory of the king's daughter was all within. Her thoughts were ever running upon the excellences of a monastic life ; to be a



nun was more after her heart than to be a queen, for that sweet truth was never out of her mind that the Angels neither marry nor are given in marriage; and she would fain be as they, if so be it would please God to give her the peerless gift, and who that heartily covets it is not assisted thereto? *O quam pulchra est casta generatio cum claritate! immortalis enim est memoria illius: quoniam apud Deum nota est et apud homines.*

This panting after holy virginity, for which many of the Saints have been so conspicuous almost from their cradles, seems unreal to the children of the world. Of course it does: they cannot even put themselves for a moment in the position of those who so feel. It would require a transposing of all their affections quite out of the question in their case, even in imagination, a new nomenclature both for things earthly and things heavenly, a new measure and a new balance, which even they who fall and by God's grace rise again do but handle clumsily for a long while. How do all graces seem even to such penitents as nothing, because they can never attain that one so fair, so bright, so beautiful! What is there in penance so productive of humility as the keen rankling thought that the virgin's crown is lost? And if they are blessed who so learn to humble and to afflict themselves, if they are blessed who are the least in the kingdom of Heaven, is it too much to kneel with lowliest veneration and a supplicating spirit before the altars of the virgin Saints, where God is honored in His servants, praying Him to quicken their prevailing prayers that we may have nerve to bring our penance to a safe issue, and so attain unto our rest?

The case being so with the most sweet gift of vir-

ginity, Bega, says her biographer in his touching way,<sup>1</sup> “studied to hear the bleating of the heavenly Lamb, with the ear of hearing ; and to weave herself a nuptial robe from Its fleece, that she might be able to go forth to Its nuptials, like a bride ornamented with her jewels, to see her Betrothed decorated with a crown, and to be clothed by Him with the garment of salvation, and that she might deserve to be surrounded by the robe of eternal gladness. Despising thus all the allurements of this impure world, its vanities and false delusions, the venerable virgin, offering up her virginity one day to God, bound herself by a vow that she would not contract nor experience the bands of marriage with any one, by her own will, that<sup>2</sup> not knowing the marriage-bed in sin she might have fruit in respect of holy souls.”

While she was meditating upon this vow of chastity, which possibly she had not made formally, a person suddenly stood before her, of an agreeable aspect and reverently clothed. Whether it was one of the blessed Angels, or one of the departed Saints, or some holy man to whom the secrets of her mind had been revealed, we are not told. He seemed to know all that was passing in her thoughts, and admonished her to keep the laudable vow of chastity. And before leaving her he gave her a bracelet with a cross graved upon it, saying, “Receive this blessed gift sent to you by the Lord God, by which you may know that you are for His service and that He is your Spouse. Place it therefore as a sign upon your heart and upon your arm, that you may admit no one else beside Him.” When he had uttered these words he disappeared, leaving the holy virgin overwhelmed with spiritual consolation. Indeed she

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Tomlinson's Trans. in the Carlisle Tracts, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> This is the third antiphon in the Commune Virginum.

needed now more than ordinary strength in order to overcome the world and carry out her brave and godly purpose.

From what follows we must suppose either that the Irish king, her father, had fallen off from his first fervor in the faith, or that the monkish historian has at the outset somewhat exaggerated his submission to the divine law. It fell out that the fame of her beauty and maidenly bearing was carried as far as to the court of Norway. The report of her virtues, together with the power and wealth of her father, induced the prince, the heir to the throne, to desire her for his bride. Whereupon he sent some ambassadors into Ireland, whose first duty was to see and judge whether the beauty and acquirements of the princess came at all near to what was reported of her, and if it were so, then to ask her in marriage from her father. The ambassadors found that so far from having exaggerated, fame had even fallen short of the loveliness and grace of Bega ; and without any further scruple they demanded her in marriage for the heir of Norway. Her father, having already sufficient alliances among the Irish chieftains, was ambitious to extend his influence beyond the seas, and he lent a willing, nay, even a greedy ear to the proposals of the Norwegian ambassadors. He sent them to their own country loaded with presents, and with a message to the prince that if he would come himself into Ireland and espouse his daughter, he would give her honorably to him : for that it was not dignified or safe to send a young damsel of such high birth and quality into a distant land under other escort than that of her husband.

The Norwegian prince admitted the justice and propriety of the Irish king's demand. The matter was debated in the council of his father, and it was deter-

mined that the prince should sail for Ireland and espouse the lovely Bega. The winds were fair and the seas calm, and in a short time the prince and his train set foot upon the Irish shores. On the day of their landing, the king gave them a magnificent reception, and a sumptuous banquet ; and as it was now eventide it was unanimously agreed to defer all mention of the business on which they had come till the morrow. Then followed a scene of wassail and of riot, such as have been too characteristic of the free and ungrudging hospitality of the Irish ; but which ill accords with our notions of a king given up to the divine law. It appears that when the night was far advanced the feast was over, and the sober and the drunken locked in deep sleep.

But the holy Bega—she was no stranger to all that was going on about her. Alas ! she knew too well the purport of the prince's visit ; she knew the ambition of her father ; she knew that to all appearance the secret wish of her heart, her holy covetousness, was not to be satisfied. As her biographer says, she was exceedingly troubled within herself, fearing and imagining that the lily of her secluded garden was about to be immediately plucked and defiled, and that her precious treasure, preserved with great care and much labor in an earthen vessel, yea, if I may so say, in a vase of glass, was about to be snatched away.

Indeed her case seemed desperate ; the palace gates were locked ; there were sentries at all the avenues leading to it ; the watchmen trode heavily and regularly, all were wide awake, as though the evening's debauch rendered double vigilance necessary. The bravest men in Ireland were on their accustomed guard round the bedside of the king, and in all the passages of his dwelling, with a dagger on their thighs, a battleaxe on their

shoulders, and a javelin in their hands. And if she could have penetrated beyond the palace, what then? Where should she lie hid? She knew her father's temper; he would drag her from the very altars of a convent if she took refuge there. Besides he had passed his royal word to the Norwegian prince, and even a parent is ruthless where honor is at stake. She knew what the keeping of a royal word had once done, when he who gave it was ashamed to break it before the chief estates of Galilee. There was but one solitary means of escape to which Bega could betake herself; it was to prayer, the prayer of faith. She mourned in her prayer and was vexed; the enemy cried so, and the ungodly came on so fast. She mourned in her prayer, for Satan already rejoiced at his approaching victory; she mourned for the dove's wing, and marvellously was the dove's wing given to her.

The time of night is described as being that when drowsiness comes strongest upon men who are keeping vigils. But Bega had no temptation to drowsiness, for her spirit was galled and vexed. She poured out her heart like water, offering up her prayer with the choice offering of holy tears; and she said, "O Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God and of the Virgin, the author and lover, inspirer and consecrator, preserver and crowner of virginity, as Thou knowest how, as it pleaseth Thee, and as Thou art able to do, preserve in me untouched the resolution I have taken, that I may dedicate it to Thee in the heart, and in the flesh of integrity. For Thou, author of nature, didst, in the time of the natural law, bedeck Thy shepherd Abel with a double wreath, namely, of virginity and of martyrdom; Thou, under the written law, didst snatch away to the heavens, Elijah, clothed in the whiteness of integrity;

Thou didst send before Thee, Thy Baptist and precursor John, ignorant of stain, and of snowy chastity. Thou also didst set forth the main hope of the world, our Lady, as a most beautiful and special mirror for grace and honor among virgins, out of whose womb, taking upon Thyself the failings of our nature, like a bridegroom going forth from his nuptial couch, Thou didst appear a Saviour to the world. Thou also, calling Thy beloved John from the nuptials to the wedding feast of the Lamb, hast preserved him for ever, blooming in the unfading flower of virginity, and hast delivered to him to be guarded, the box of Thy ointments, the propitiation of human reconciliation. Thou hast crowned Agnes, Agatha, Lucia and Catherine, and very many others wrestling in the faith of Thy name for their chastity, and hast magnified Thy blessed name by these triumphant signs. Therefore I pray, by the grace of these, that I, Thine handmaid, may find favor in Thine eyes, that Thou mayest be a helper to me in what I ought to do in my trouble ; that Thou being my Benefactor, Leader, Ruler and Protector, I may render to Thee the vow which my lips have pronounced.”<sup>3</sup>

Thus she prayed, and sorrowed deeply ; for her father was an austere man, and of an inflexible will, and she knew it was hopeless to attempt to divert him from his purpose. But if Satan rejoiced in the prospect of frustrating a pure and holy resolution so fatal to his kingdom, the heavenly Angels were only the more intent upon the custody of this precious flower in the garden of their Lord. In the deep stillness of the night, when her prayer was concluded, there came

<sup>3</sup> Mr. Tomlinson's Trans. pp. 8, 9, 10.

a sounding Voice, which said, "Fear not, Bega, most beloved friend; thy prayer is heard. Hearken, O daughter, consider and incline thine ear. Forget also thine own people and thy father's house. Thou shalt have a house not made with hands, now prepared for thee in heaven. It behoveth thee, then, to go from kingdom to kingdom, from thy people to another people, from land to land, from Ireland to Britain, which is called England, and there thy days being ended in good, I will take thee into the fellowship of Angels. Arise, therefore, and take the bracelet by which thou art pledged to Me, and descending to the sea, thou shalt find a ship ready prepared, which will transport thee into Britain."

The virgin rose: her sorrows were past, the rain of her tears was over and gone, for the voice of her turtle had sounded in the land. She thought not of the difficulties, but in the energy of faith she rose and descended. A deep unnatural slumber oppressed the guards, as though they too had been revellers. At the touch of the mysterious bracelet the portals flew open, till the virgin stood free in the cold and refreshing air. The seaside was soon gained; the ship was there, and she was received on board without hesitation or objection. Every step was smoothed by miracles; for she had the faith of Abraham, meriting to be called as Abraham was called, and strengthened to obey the call; for she left her father's house, and went out not knowing whither, except that God was everywhere. The tender maiden was a true daughter of Sarah, for overwhelming as was the darkness of her prospects and her divine visitation past belief, yet she was not afraid with any amazement.

Now let us pause upon this act of Bega. It is worth

able to examine it, even though it cause us to digress. In course one would deprecate anything like an apologetic tone or a patronizing explanation when speaking of the blessed Saints whom the Catholic Church holds up to our affectionate reverence. Yet when men have departed so far from catholic principles that they have to learn them again painfully, syllable by syllable, as though it were a foreign language, it is obvious that they are wholly incompetent in a great number of instances to understand, much less set a value upon, the deeds of our catholic ancestors. One great object in writing the lives of the Saints is to recall, so far as may be, the old catholic temper, to have the old weights and measures of catholic morality recognized as standards. It will not therefore be out of place, though it seems a cold interruption of a religious narrative, to say something on the propriety of this act of St. Bega.

She fled by night from her father's house to avoid a marriage to which his word was pledged : she consulted neither priest, nor kindred : she went she knew not where, imprudently, the world would say, and under the influence of a heated imagination : and the very first step of this extraordinary line of conduct was to entrust herself, a helpless virgin, to the company of rude mariners, who must obviously have been ignorant of her rank. This is one way of stating the facts : and admitting her to have been sincerely conscientious, was she not neglecting a plain duty ? Was it not an offence against natural piety ? Was it not, at best, seeking after what is only a counsel of perfection through a manifest breach of an actual commandment ? Was it not doing evil that good might come ? Now let it be premised that no one pretends to say



that all the heroic actions of the Saints are imitable by us: this is a caution which cannot be too frequently repeated; one of the greatest illusions of the devil is to persuade unformed penitents to attempt single actions of the Saints. For, first of all, what was with them the general result of their whole conduct, or a harmonious part of a consistent conduct, may be with us an irregular, disconnected act, and therefore something totally different from what it was in them: and again, we cannot tell in their case how far they were inspired, in what singular ways they were impressed or with what degree of clearness the Holy Spirit vouchsafed to make His Will known to them. Admitting then that the actions of the Saints are not always imitable, we would contend that Bega was justified in this act of flying from her father's house to fulfil her vow of virginity; and as the objection which may be raised against this single act will apply to the whole monastic system and the teaching of monastic writers, it may be worth while to say a little more about it.

There are two things concerning a holy life, the neglect or adoption of which must entirely change the character of a man's religion, and however little connected they may seem when first stated, they are in reality closely bound together, the one leading to, strengthening, sustaining and perfecting the other. They are Confession, and the practice of Election, both as to the general state of life which it is expedient for us to lead, and also as to the management of particular occurrences with which we have to deal. If Confession is disused, the inward life of the soul loses what may be called its sacramental character; everything is displaced, cause and effect disjoined and transposed; and

the medicines of penance taken at random are converted into the poison of self-will. The practice of electing one rather than another line of life or conduct, and making that election a solemn ritual act, under the spiritual guidance of another, and according to systematic rules, has for one of its chief results a strict conscientiousness in the details of everyday duty, and is closely connected with the grace of final perseverance according to the text, *Cor ingrediens duas vias non habebit successus*. Now it is here that Confession and Election are so intimately united ; for it is clear that conscientiousness in details is equally the moral result of doing everything as knowing it will have to be honestly and with much shame revealed to another. Indeed the very nature of sacramental Confession is of itself calculated to bring about such a conscientiousness, as being an awful, though mercifully permitted, anticipation and rehearsal of the last judgment. Although, as Suarez says, secular persons remaining in the world may find the greatest benefit from Election, for it prepares them for temptations and the surprises of sin, and is also a remedy to be administered to those who have been great sinners,<sup>4</sup> yet it is obvious that it is an indispensable duty when they come to decide such questions as whether they shall marry, or go into holy orders, or enter a monastery.

St. Ignatius in his *Spiritual Exercises* notes two ways in which a general or particular Election may be made ; one by an impartial deliberation with prayer and a weighing of and reasoning upon the opposite views of the question ; another when the mind is clearly and unmistakeably impressed from above with the convic-

<sup>4</sup> Of what importance then to us in our present state !

tion that it ought to make such a choice. The latter is of course supernatural, and is unlikely to occur to one not in the habit of timidly and sensitively looking out for God's Will in every matter, great or small, and being tranquil and indifferent as to the consequences which the choice may bring upon one's self. Such was the kind of Election in which for the most part those vows of virginity, so frequent in the lives of the Saints, took their rise. So at the very outset any measures taken because of them are not to be judged as acts of the Saint's own will, or private deliberation, or original bent of mind: and this must alter our way of looking at them very materially. We live in times when men are apt *first* to choose, and *then* (speaking even of good men) in the *second* place to see what they can make of their own choice so as to glorify God, to edify His Church, and save their souls. The Saints began with a quiet and total indifferency to all ways and states of life, sought *first* how they with their turn of mind could glorify God, and then simply chose upon that investigation, embracing their state of life with the quiet ardor of self-renunciation. Now the first line of conduct is so sadly below the last that they who pursue the one can hardly, even by a mental effort, be competent judges of what they did who embraced the other. This is very much to be remembered.

The question at issue is thus, and equitably, put upon very different grounds: it is taken to a higher and more competent court. Supposing then a Saint to have a vocation brought before him by a supernatural impression, vision or voice, and by applying to this impression the usual tests for discerning spirits, to find it no illusion of Satan, but really from God, surely all other duties are immediately superseded, in the same *way*

(we do not speak of *degree*) that they were in the Old Testament times when God's will was distinctly revealed about any matter. Still it is not, so to speak, a new revelation, but a special guidance given to an individual respecting the application to his own case of rules already given. The case before us, for instance, is the desertion of parents: we read in Scripture such passages as these, *Qui non odit patrem suum et matrem, fratres et sorores, adhuc autem et animam suam, non potest Meus esse discipulus. Sine ut mortui sepeliant mortuos suos. Qui dixerunt patri suo, et matri suæ, Nescio vos; et fratribus suis, Ignoro vos; et nescierunt filios suos, hi custodierunt eloquium Tuum, et pactum Tuum servaverunt.*<sup>5</sup> Consistently with this, great writers have taught that in the election of our state God's vocation, conscientiously ascertained so far as we can, is to supersede the claims even of our parents to control our choice. *Ab hoc concilio amovendi sunt carnis propinqui,* says St. Thomas.<sup>6</sup> Their view was some such as this,—God is the God of order, and as the Church is so far as possible a copy of Heaven, it is instinct with the highest and most beautiful order, which can only be preserved by a renunciation of self-will, and an election of a state of life, for every member of the body not obeying his special vocation is a dislocated limb, useless himself, and impeding and encumbering the functions of the members near him. Acting upon this view, such men as SS. Thomas Aquinas, Peter of Alcantara, Francis Xavier, Louis Bertrandi, and others, embraced the monastic life without so much as communicating

<sup>5</sup> St. Luke, xiv. 26, ix. 60; Deut. xxxiii. 9.

<sup>6</sup> The whole of this matter is discussed by St. Thomas in the *Secunda Secundæ*, quæst. 186—189. Also by Rodriguez, 2, v. 7; and by St. Alphonso, *Practica di amar.* cap. xi.

their design to their parents. Neither was this a view of late ages only : it seems to follow necessarily upon a belief that the apostolic life may be and ought to have been lived in the Church in all ages. Cassian relates of Apollonius a story which shows how natural the "*Sine ut mortui sepeliant mortuos suos*" came to the old Saints of Egypt. The brother of that great abbot, knocking at his cell-door, importuned him to come and render him assistance in trouble. The abbot demanded why he came to him rather than to his other brother, who was a secular person : the reply was that the other brother had (the abbot not knowing it) been dead fifteen years ; and I, rejoined the abbot, have been dead twenty, for so long is it since I interred myself in this cell.

This digression may perhaps be forgiven as suggesting the thought whether it is wiser to assume the reasoning of our own times as a premiss, and judge the Saints accordingly, rather than to try, though the effort be humbling at first, to enter into the principles which led to their actions, with a view, not only of judging *them* correctly, but of judging ourselves by them. Alas ! they who nowadays study in the lives of the Saints are travellers in a foreign country ; there is neither profit nor pleasure till the first irksomeness of a new language and strange manners is worn off. Yet we speak of them as though they were altogether such persons as ourselves.

But to return. We left the Irish princess embarking on a strange ship, leaving rank, luxury, home, kindred, all things, for her exceeding love of holy virginity. One who so loved chaste virginity must have been a person of keen, intense affections, and doubtless felt as few can feel towards those she left behind. But she might remember perhaps how the heavenly Spouse of

virgin souls had left His Mother at the age of twelve, without a farewell, and kept her sorrowing three long days ; and how the first time He preached the Gospel it was at a marriage feast, and in roughly sounding words to His Blessed Mother ; and so St. Bega might take heart. For the Lord allowed not the plea of those who would first go and bid them farewell that are at home before they followed Him. St. Cyril<sup>7</sup> says of the man who promised to follow Christ if he might bid his kindred farewell, " This promise is worthy of our admiration and full of all praise ; but to bid farewell to those who are at home, to get leave from them, shows that he was still somehow divided from the Lord, in that he had not yet resolved to make his venture with his whole heart. For to wish to consult relations, who would not agree to his proposal, betokens one somewhat wavering. Wherefore our Lord condemns this, saying, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God. He puts his hand to the plough who is ambitious to follow, yet looks back again when he seeks an excuse for delay in returning home, and consulting with his friends." But Bega made her venture with a whole heart. Great and dazzling was all that she left behind, but greater still and brighter the prize of holy virginity after which she pressed through the dreary prospect before her.

The Irish seas are not often calm ; and Bega's voyage seems to have been attended with considerable danger. The voyage was prosperous and the wind favorable till they neared the English shore, that part of the Cumberland coast which went by the name of Copeland ; there, whether from the violence of the storm or clumsy pilot-

<sup>7</sup> Aur. Cat. in loc. Oxf. Tr.

ing, the vessel was almost lost among the rocks which lay round a jutting headland. Bega, it is said, made a vow that if she was preserved she would build a holy house upon that headland, where still stands to this day the college of St. Bees. She did land in safety, and the memorial of her vow still lives upon that beautiful shore, and the house upon her headland is one of the fountains which supply with clergy the northern shires of England.

Bega's first business, after disembarkation, was to examine the surrounding country. It was covered with dusky, tangled wood, running down even to the sea-coast, as may still be seen in some places where the trees from the continual action of the fierce west winds and the splashing of the salt spray throw out their half-leaved branches to the east, and look as if they had been cut in a stiff form by artificial means. The country too was thinly peopled, and the presence of the solemn sounding sea, and the silence of the umbrageous woods, rendered it a fit place wherein to dedicate a solitary life to God. There she constructed a cell, or, as others think, adapted a seaside cave for her hermitage. "There," says her biographer, "she passed many years in the struggle of most strict conversation, laboring a long time for the Lord. Therefore she sat in solitude, and raising herself above herself, she had leisure, and saw how the Lord Himself is God, tasting frequently how pleasant and sweet He is to all who hope in Him."

Daily, rising above the level of the green tree tops, she saw the purple peaks and ridges; beyond those beautiful mountains St. Oswald was ruling in sanctity and peace, and St. Aidan making his episcopal visitations on foot, entering the scattered farms, teaching the little children, and leaving heavenly peace behind him

whithersoever he went. The king in his bright crown, the weary footsore bishop,—each in their way are doing the work of God, and spreading the Redeemer's kingdom. And Bega too, beyond the mountains,—she in her way is doing the same work. While she sings the divine praises, and her meditations are differently attuned, sometimes by the heavy thunder of the rolling sea, sometimes by the scarcely whispering winds or deep voices of the wood-pigeons in the trees, she is spreading the Redeemer's kingdom. Her prayers, her intercessions, her acts of austerity, her self-imposed loneliness, her virginal sacrifice, are communicating secret vigor to the whole Church, and have power in the invisible world to bring out gifts for her fellow-men. For to love God is the first commandment, and activity for our neighbors, without the love of God, is not the keeping of the second.

But Bega's life in Copeland forest was not wholly in her Psalter. Tradition assigns her other occupations.<sup>8</sup> She was skilled in the knowledge of medicinal plants, and applied her knowledge to relieve the ailments of the few poor who then inhabited that woody region. She perhaps was the first on that coast who gathered the rosy carrageen, and bleached it white, as a sovereign recipe for many ills, well known at this day among the cottagers of Furness, who go forth to gather it, or send their little children, when a rough sea and a west wind have strewed it on the beach. It was said too that she lived in supernatural familiarity with the creatures, the sea-birds and the wolves, and that they in part supplied her with her food. How touching is the communion with nature which has always characterized the

<sup>8</sup> Mr. Tomlinson's Tract, p. 12. These traditions are not noticed in the Cottonian MS., of which Mr. T.'s tract is mostly a translation.



Saints ! As in the Holy Scriptures we read of beasts and birds commissioned to fulfil the office of angels in ministering to the heirs of salvation, so in the records of the Church we find the same things occurring to the Saints. If the lions revered the virgin Daniel, they showed a like veneration for the Christian martyrs in the bloody amphitheatres. A savage bear licked the wounds of St. Andronicus, a lioness crouched at the feet of St. Tarachus, a raven defended the unburied body of St. Vincent. St. Martin commanded the serpents and they obeyed him, St. Antony of Padua called on the fishes to come to his preaching when the heretics despised it, and St. Francis, above all, lived in closest communion with the inferior animals. The swallows of Alviano, the water-bird of Rieti, the pheasant of Sienna, the wolf of Gubbio, the falcon of Laverna—there are strange and sweet records how all these did homage to the blessed St. Francis. Neither are such things as these merely the legends of late superstitious ages. The lives of the Egyptian fathers are full of such things ; St. Athanasius records them of St. Antony ; and early in the fourth century St. Macrina, the grandmother of the great Basil, taking refuge with her husband in the forests of Pontus during persecution, was miraculously fed by stags, and St. Gregory Nazianzen has recorded the miracle. And the patterns of all these things are in the Scripture histories. This is one of the ways in which from time to time sanctity is permitted to retrieve portions of that state in which man was in Eden, and surely such records may be a great consolation to us of weak faith as showing that the manner of life the world speaks against, of self-denial, solitude, voluntary discomfort, fast, vigil, and virginity, is in reality that life wherein we are truly

working our way back to the Eden whence we have wandered, as well as imitating Him whose merciful assumption of our nature pledges to us at the last even more than the Eden we have lost. Such miracles are not merely interesting, romantic, poetical, but they solemnly attest the power and heavenliness of that system of catholic morals, so often stigmatized as degrading, servile and superstitious ; and it is as attestations of this that we should keep them in view, and bring them into notice. It is in vain for any criticism to make an impression upon the number, the prevalence in all countries and in all ages, and the authentic records of these legends : and how then shall we gainsay that system under which such miracles took place, such miracles as Scripture had already given us patterns of, such miracles as both for greatness and for number our Blessed Lord Himself taught us to expect after He was ascended up on high ?

Did the homeless Bega begin to make her seaside cave a home ? Did something like a local affection steal upon her, and tell her how hard it was to be wholly detached from the creatures, and that there was a poetry in a holy life which might come to be sought for its own sake, and so do a mischief ? Or did God please to try His servant further, because she had strength to bear it ? However this may be, her long residence in the solitudes of Copeland came to an end. She had been called away from her father's house, and now she was to leave the cave and woods so dear to her. Probably through the envy of the devil, angry at being worsted in his strife with a weak and lonely woman, the shores of Copeland became infested by pirates. These were wild beasts with whom no communion could be held. True it was she had nothing of riches

to tempt them, nothing bright or fair but the miraculous bracelet of her spiritual espousals. But her treasure was her chastity ; and so disquieted was the holy virgin by the presence of these terrible marauders, that she consulted God, and was commanded by revelation to fly from the place ; an injunction which she seems to have obeyed with such promptitude that she left behind the bracelet she so much prized. This fearful alarm which invaded the quietness of her beloved hermitage, the hardship of this new exile, were to Bega but fresh proofs of the love of her heavenly Spouse, drawing her more closely to Himself, and making her realize still further that life is but a pilgrimage to Him, through which His justifications were to be the subject of her songs. Of the wicked it is said that their houses are safe from fear, and that the rod of God is not upon them : but the Saints have another heritage than this.

Bega turned her footsteps eastward. By what path she crossed the mountains, or whether she skirted them by the lowlands lying between the Solway and the hills, and so entered Northumberland by the romantic valleys of the Tyne, we are not told. Probably while she tended some of the sick poor she had heard of Oswald and the blessed Aidan, whose names and good deeds would doubtless reach the opposite coast, notwithstanding the thinness of the inhabitants and the infrequency of communication. To St. Aidan, however, she bent her steps. "To him," says the monk,<sup>9</sup> "as to the brideman of her Bridegroom, Bega the bride of Christ, drawing near, disclosed every secret of her soul, and those divine things that were wrought about her ; and sought counsel from him after what manner she might draw the bands of love

and obedience towards her heavenly Spouse more tightly. The man of God, then, like an excellent watchman on the walls of Jerusalem, seeing her seeking and desiring to find her Beloved, struck her more deeply and wounded her with the dart of divine love, and taking off the expallium of the dress she had hitherto worn, clothed her with a new garment of salvation. For the holy bishop, according to the custom, blessed and consecrated the holy and uncorrupt virgin as the spouse of Christ, and new bride of the Lamb. But he put upon her head a veil for a royal diadem, and a black garment for the purple robe, before which the region of the Northumbrians had no nun, as Bede the historian testifies.<sup>10</sup> The Saint certainly did well in this towards her, in order that she might thereafter preserve that sanctity, under a solemn vow, which she had hitherto kept by her own deliberate resolve ; and that what she had taken up to be maintained by her conduct in secret, she might now show in public, even by her outward dress. And the holy presul inflamed the virgin lamp which shone before by itself, with the breath of his holy exhortation, that it might shine more and more, and become inextinguishable before the coming of the Bridegroom, and administered to it in prayer the fire of divine love, the oil of good works, and the wick of pious devotion."

This was a great change in Bega's life. Deep as had been her peace upon the wooded shores of Copeland, she now enjoyed an inward peace which was deeper far. Selfwill is apt to mingle even with the best of our deeds ; it not unfrequently mars penance, heartily taken up and austere carried through. St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi said there was more merit in bearing a sickness

<sup>10</sup> *i. e.* on the supposition that Bega is identical with Heru. Bede iv. 23.

with conformity to God's Will than in a life of self-imposed austerities, and more consolation too, for in the one case we know the Will of God, and in the other we cannot tell how far we may be self-willed : and if ever she saw any of the novices, of whom she was mistress, acquiring a love of prayer and seeming to prefer it to obedience and the external offices of the convent, she was accustomed to load them with external offices beyond any others, in order to mortify that dangerous self-will which was growing up even with the love of prayer. There is no doubt then that Bega was now in a much more advantageous position. She was not left to regulate herself, to choose austerities and to take upon herself the responsibility of a religious life. St. Aidan was her bishop, and obedience to him was clearly the will of God. No sooner was she clothed in her black dress than she entered a haven of peace : she was like a pilot resigning the helm to another now that the mouth of the harbor is gained. For obedience is like Eden, a place, if not of carelessness, yet of childlike security.

Surely that solitary virgin, of royal blood, with her veiled head and long black robe, must have been an edifying sight to the Northumbrians ; and yet a strange one too, for it was the first nun seen in the north of England ; and the very sight of her among the half-taught people must have been as impressive as one of St. Aidan's sermons. The first nun was she in those goodly shires so soon to be peopled with the spiritual children of St. Hilda. If it be correct that her first nunnery was somewhere on the northern bank of the Wear, she did not stay long there, and perhaps did not make any establishment. We must follow her elsewhere.

In the beautiful bay of the Tees, when the sun goes down behind the inland village of Hart, a golden splen-

dor lights up the northern promontory of that crescent of bright waters. Less bold than the shadowy cliffs of Yorkshire where the Cleveland hills run down into the sea, there is something singularly striking in the Durham promontory, running far out into the waves which make almost incessant thunder among the fretted arches which the tide has scooped out for itself. The town of Hartlepool does not stand at quite the extremity of the cape, but a space of green turf intervenes, without a tree, between the sea and the church of St. Hilda, whose low massy tower with its flying buttresses may be seen far off. This peninsula, or island as it was of old, went by the name of Heortheu or Hertesie, that is, the island of stags. And this was the gift which Bega received from St. Oswald. At that time probably the coast was covered with dense forests, and trees grew where the sea is now master. Any one walking from Seaton Carew to Hartlepool at low tide may perceive that the beach for a great distance is composed of the roots of trees, and possibly the swampy shallow, which, before the new harbor was completed, rendered the approach to Hartlepool so wearisomely circuitous at high tide, may have reached to the sea northward as well as southward, and presenting no barrier to the stags may yet have stayed the hunter, and so rendered that woody cape a favorite haunt with those animals. But there came one now to that secluded promontory whose feet had been nimble as harts' feet to fly from the danger of the impure pirates, and whose soul longed after God even more than any hart had ever desired the safe shelter of that forest.

Behold then the blessed Bega at Hartlepool, sicut cervus ad fontes aquarum ! How much there would be to remind her of her beloved Copeland ! Here were no suns setting in the sea, and she who had been accus-

tomed to see the great orb sink down in the Atlantic must now look westward towards her ancient solitude, while the sun sets over the inland ridge of Hart. But the cape of Hartlepool was no solitude. By the aid of St. Oswald, and under the counsel of St. Aidan, Bega built a monastery, not perhaps such a lordly structure as Coldingham, but still a monastery of great note. Let it be remembered that she was the first nun Northumberland had ever seen. There were worldly-wise people in those days as well as now, and a very unpractical and hopeless thing in their eyes would be the single woman in her black serge. Yet so it was—and perhaps we may learn something by it—Christians effect wonderful things when their will is hearty and single. Bega built a great monastery; she built it within as well as without; she not only raised the house, but filled it with nuns. Something was there so beautiful and convincing in the evangelical character of a nun that the new house of Hartlepool was not only thronged with world-renouncing virgins, but it was the cause of an outbreak of zeal and holy love, like the zeal of “Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam,” in the days of Ezra, who proposed the putting away of strange wives; for Bega’s biographer tells us that “not only many virgins were brought after her to the Heavenly King, invited and stirred up by her exhortation and example, but also many converts, repenting of their married state and secular conversation, were offered in joy and exultation in the temple to the Divine King, and subjected to His service. So the bride of Christ, who languished for the love of her Bridegroom, ardently wished to be supported by flowers, to be surrounded by apple-trees.”

They who among flowers and sweet rushes and green

boughs thread the passages and mount the staircases of the Jesuits' College at Rome on the feast of St. Aloysius, and see his poor bedroom now converted into a gaily decorated chapel, and the place crowded with Roman boys thinking of him with love and honor for his wonderful chastity, feel a strange pleasure in the contrast when their eyes light upon a picture of the youthful noble performing menial offices in the college kitchen. The Irish princess affords us the same example of a humility delighting in abject places and occupations. While the nunnery of Hartlepool was building, she was too weak to labor with her hands, but she made herself the slave of the workmen. She cooked their provisions for them, carried their dinners to them so that their work might be as little interrupted as possible, and, as the monk says, she was ever ministering and running backwards and forwards, like a bee laden with honey. At length the holy house was finished, the workmen dismissed, the nuns come, and Bega become an abbess in the Church of Christ. But there was still work to be done, work in which her old skill in broidery would help her. The church was built, but there were frontals, corporals, curtains, copes, chasubles, and a hundred things wanted in the way of decoration ; and accordingly the whole place was full of gentle nuns, spinning, and weaving, and sewing, and copying patterns, and yet the while silent and recollected, their hearts stayed on God and occupied with the sweets of celestial meditation. For notwithstanding all this other work, and the wants and unsettledness of a new monastery, "she urged them most fervently to the keeping of fasts and watchings, to the singing of hymns and psalms, and spiritual songs, and to the study of holy reading ; so that she was the admira-



tion of the whole congregation. But among the other gifts of virtue with which the Divine Grace had endowed her, she exceeded in humility beyond the standard of nature and human habit. Thus she did Martha's work that she might not neglect Mary's holy rest, nor, on the other hand, condemn a necessary service on account of Mary's sabbath. And because she was accepted by God and man, she enlarged her monastery with possessions given by princes ; to wit, first, by St. Oswald, and afterwards by St. Oswin, the future martyr."

It would have been interesting to know what kind of a rule St. Aidan gave to this first Northumbrian nunnery, how far it was his own drawing up, or how far copied from rules already existing, or how far modified by the suggestions of the blessed abbess herself. We should wish to know whether strict cloister was prescribed, or whether the nuns were occupied in works of mercy outside their walls, and whether there was any conventual hospitality connected with the peculiarly safe and inviting anchorage of the bay, so greatly needed along that bleak and repulsive coast, and which one wild night so often fills with shipping even in the present days of improved navigation. However there were doubtless the offices of the Church, and mental prayer, and examinations of conscience, and humiliations in chapter, and a covetousness of chastity, and a love of Christ-like poverty, and a prompt self-abasing obedience : and a blessed thing, surely a very blessed thing it was for the rough-mannered Northumbrians to have such a heaven on earth amongst them, as that community of gentle women, a beacon on the rocks of that sea-fretted promontory, whose far-off light it was very pleasant to look back upon, knowing it was the first light of the kind which had shone among

the people of those various and beautiful shires of the north.

Meanwhile Christian things were growing among the Northumbrians ; and greatly gladdened, no doubt, was the heart of good St. Aidan, and a cause of very unenvious joy was it to the abbess of Hartlepool. There came another holy woman into the diocese of Lindisfarne, by the bishop's invitation ; and he gave her a site somewhere on the banks of the woodland Wear, with its thin streams and broad beds of gravel. Perhaps it might be close to Wearmouth, for Sunderland church was dedicated to St. Hilda, and St. Hilda was the stranger freshly come among the Northumbrians to emulate the example of Bega.

Meanwhile Bega grew a little discontented with her position ; for there are circumstances in which even Saints do not fear to want resignation, or at least to do their best to effect a change, and their example in this respect is not likely to be pernicious to the world at large. What Saints find it hard to submit to is a position which seems to distract them from the single thought of God and love of their heavenly Spouse. They are not backward to sacrifice the joys of secret contemplation, the raptures of prayer, the delights of the cloister, where the needs of the faith or the welfare of their neighbors call them to serve God in another way. Even Mary went out in haste when once she had ascertained her Lord's call. But when their present circumstances involve them in cares wholly or partially secular, and attach them too much to the creature when they would be entirely devoted to the service of the Creator, when the perfection which they covet seems to recede from them, holy persons have felt such a yearning after heavenly things that they have considered it

an imperative duty to divest themselves of offices and responsibilities which seem to drag their souls earthwards. How inconsistent is all this, a man of the world will say ; what guarantee is there that these restless Saints are not after all worshipping self-will, which it is the primary object of a monk or nun to renounce ? How can they be sure of it themselves ? Are not these vagaries of the old abbesses just what we see among unsettled but well-meaning religious women of our own times ? To this we may answer, Certainly not : for the catholic system is a whole, and one part succours the other, or is the complement of the other. Under it there were then, and there are to-day for such as are blessed enough to live under it, such things as discipline, superiors, obedience, confessors, spiritual directors, the obligation of vows, limited and strictly defined dispensing powers, and so forth,—very uncouth and harsh-sounding words to modern ears, menacing and despotic things which Lutheran laxity and protestant freedom and the pewholders of popular chapels will find it very difficult to live under. Indeed the monastic system altogether is to heresy very much what an exhausted receiver would be to any luckless animal whom the cruel philanthropy of science thought it needful to imprison therein. Nuns were not the patronesses of their bishops and confessors, nor the self-appointed judges of their doctrines, nor the loquacious admirers of their sermons, but very humble, sad, downcast sort of people who never imagined they had a word to say for themselves when they received an over-harsh reproof or a disagreeable order. At least good nuns, true nuns, were such as this ; and perhaps enough has been said to make it clear that Bega was a very pattern of nuns.

But what was Bega's grievance ? Alas ! a very sub-

tle and refined one, many people will think. However, imaginary and wilful conceit or not, what troubled Bega was this :—she *admired*, as her biographer most aptly words it, to see how when she had gone through so much to put off the world, behold ! she had now put it on again very unexpectedly in the shape of a Christian abbacy. In other words St. Bega came to think that Church preferment was only the world in sheep's clothing. Whatever comes of this doctrine, in holding which the abbess of Hartlepool has been by no means singular, she did her best to get out of the snare in a lawful way. There must be abbesses, there must be bishops, and in fact prelates of all sorts ; the Church could not get on without them. It cannot be supposed but that this objection would present itself to Bega's mind ; but she would probably dispose of it by a truism equally obvious, that there would always be plenty of persons, and good persons too, who would be ready to accept prelacies, and to fill them edifyingly. Yet for all that there may be higher offices in the Church than *visible* prelacies, and higher hearts to be called to them. Bega felt her dignity and power both dangerous and distressing : how was she to exercise absolute control over many nuns, who thought herself less than the least, and the chief of sinners ? how was she to endure marks of homage and respect, the highest place in chapter, and a special stall in the choir, when she pined to be abject and dishonored as Christ was ? how was she, with a mother's charity, to see that the cellarer provided for the bodily necessities of her community, when she craved after the poverty of Christ ? how was she to impose penances on the erring, when her whole nature shrunk from it ? Her self-abasement was too great, too perfect, too heavenly, to allow her to be fit to fill high places,

and exercise authority. No, says her faithful monk, "she, who washed her feet from all the dust of earthly ministration, was troubled within herself, because she thought she had as it were again defiled them under the cares of her office. For she remembered the voice of that turtle that she used to hear in her own country, that light whispering that she felt breathing in the interior of her cell, and saying, Who will give me to be as I was in former times, when God was secretly in my tabernacle, when I was intoxicated with the plenty of His House, and He gave me to drink of the torrent of His pleasure? While she frequently turned these things over in her mind, her spirit was troubled within her, because, considering how to relinquish every external business and all the ministry of Martha, and choosing Mary's best part which shall not be taken away, the renunciation of the government of the monastery which she had built, without any retractation, sat upon her mind."

Abbots and bishops seeking to lay down their crosiers and mitres to copy the humility and low estate of Christ, and popes grudging the dispensation lest the Church should suffer loss through lack of these good men's services, and the abbots and the bishops growing urgent and almost clamorous, and the popes loving them the more for their want of prompt submission in such a matter, and at length wisely dreading to interfere with a divine vocation, and reluctantly giving way—this is an edifying contest which has been many times renewed in every age of the Catholic Church. Indeed it is almost one of those few characteristics which give a tangible unity to the lives of the Saints amid their astonishing diversity. The like contest now took place between Bega and St. Aidan. The bishop refused to

give her a dispensation, or to allow her abdication. His reluctance was most natural ; for though Bega in her own estimation was the chief of sinners, to others she was a manifest vessel of God's election. Such a beginning would not promise well for Northumbrian nunneries, yet after all what could promise better ? But Bega's importunity was in the end more than a match for the bishop's reluctance. She gave him no rest ; the historian distinctly states, that, not content with seasonable requests, she was unseasonably urgent about it—instans inopportune—so strongly was she bent upon it. At length St. Aidan gave way, and Bega laid down her dignity to her own infinite contentment and exceeding joy.

Most inconsistent Saint ! She loved her nuns quite as well as her own soul. She procures the stranger from the banks of the Wear, the blessed Hilda, to be unanimously elected abbess, her election to be more than willingly confirmed by St. Aidan ; and St. Hilda resolutely refusing the proffered dignity, Bega forces it upon her with most earnest supplications, as though her acceptance of it would make *her* conscience more than easy about her resignation and the welfare of the spiritual children whom she had gathered together. "The altercation between these friends of God," says the chronicler, "was sufficiently humble and friendly, seeing that each preferred the life of the other to her own ; nor was there less strife between them about not receiving preferment than is wont to arise among the ambitious, infected with the poison of simoniacal heresy, about obtaining advancement. Yet the humility of Bega in this part was victorious, and Hilda's obedience, although unwilling, still submitted to be conquered." Hartlepool certainly witnessed strange scenes in that

seventh century ; the picturesque peninsula, the green turf glistening with the eyes of wild thyme which the salt spray spares, the broad sunny bay, the many-chambered rocks resonant for ever with the sea's innocuous thunder, the white climbing columns of angry foam which the children watch so long and so delightedly, these are all still there ; but the nunnery is gone, and St. Bega is gone, and St. Hilda, and the gentle community, and the matins and the diurnal hours, and the mental prayer, and the examinations of conscience, and the humiliations in chapter, and all the holy and beautiful theology of monastic vows ; these are gone, and much more is gone with them, which would be a blessing to Hartlepool, even though it does not miss them, for there are stages when disease has gone so far that the patients do not dream they are so near being incurable. Such was Hartlepool in the seventh century ; the bustling port, the new harbor, the railway, the growing town enlarging itself to meet its novel position, are doubtless things of Christian import and furnish grave questions for the Church to solve. Certainly opening our eyes to the merits of the past ought to do anything but blind us to the *real* advantages of the present, yet there is a Christian admonition too in getting ourselves to imagine Hartlepool as it was when the stags were but half dispossessed, and the first nun of the north was the crosiered queen of that fair peninsula.

The endowments of the Saints are very various. The gifts requisite for founding a monastery and sheltering it in its feeble beginnings are quite different from those required for the government of an established and thoroughly furnished community. They are of a much rarer kind ; and it would appear, from many instances,

that where they have been given God does not suffer the possessors of them to rest. They are, as it were, driven forth and driven forth perpetually to make new beginnings, and so fulfil their functions in the Church. An active yet very settled disposition, forbearing patience, power of influencing others, a quickness, almost inventive, to detect ways and means, an aptness to use them, a dexterity in converting seeming obstacles into real succors, a calm foresight and a very gentle determination,—these seem on the whole the qualities required in a founder. St. Theresa, for example, had a singular talent that way, which may be discerned even through the modest concealments of her autobiography, and her accounts of her sixteen chief foundations, written in obedience to the orders of her confessors, Francis Garcia of Toledo, the Dominican, and father Ripaldi, the Jesuit. Thus also we read of St. David before he settled at Ross, that he “went about preaching and founding monasteries,” which seems a strange method of expression at first sight, and of St. Lugid we read that he founded a *hundred* monasteries. So in like manner was Bega driven forth, from Copeland by the pirates, from Hartlepool by her own humility and thirst for perfection, from both places doubtless by God’s vocation. So long as there were the obstacles, perplexities, and anxieties of a new foundation to cope with, so long Bega found no danger or distress in being foremost. It was no more than the privilege of laboring and suffering above others. But when quietness brought dignity, honor and power, her lowliness took the alarm. Her subsequent history is very obscure, obscure as the holy abbess would have wished it to be, when she bade Hilda farewell, and left her hard-won promontory behind. But it seems not improbable that she too had the gift of



making foundations. Beal, or Beag Hall, near Pomfret, is supposed by some to have been one of her foundations ;<sup>11</sup> and her name is connected with three other places in Yorkshire, viz. Tadcaster, Newton Kyme and Aberford. However it seems agreed, on the whole, though not without dissentient voices, that when she left Hartlepool she went to Calcaria, and further that Calcaria is Tadcaster, a town nine miles south of York, and near the river Wharfe. At Tadcaster she "built herself a mansion, and led a life of great perfection there for a long time." But it does not appear whether the mansion for herself was a monastery, or simply a hermitage ; but one would infer from the mention of her great perfection, and from her having resigned the government of Hartlepool because it stood in the way of her perfection, that her life at Tadcaster was that of a hermit. What interior trials she suffered, what heights she climbed, and to what a union with God the blessed virgin now attained, is unknown to any but the Spirit who led her as He pleased along the paths of perfection, and in a measure possibly to her Guardian Angel. Enough for us that she lives to intercede with our Intercessor for the Church of those parts which she illustrated by her sanctity.

One pleasure there was which Bega did not think it well to deny herself : a visit, said to have been annual,<sup>12</sup> to her successor St. Hilda, then abbess of the famous monastery of Whitby. During the seven years of St. Hilda's weary sickness the monk says that Bega "visited her frequently and dwelt a long time with her." This looks as if either the visit had never been a formal yearly courtesy, or at least very naturally ceased to be

<sup>11</sup> Mr. Tomlinson states that there is no evidence of this, p. 17.

<sup>12</sup> See No. iv. of this work, p. 42.

so when it pleased God to subject St. Hilda to such long and acute sufferings. Evident it is that there was a most dear and holy friendship between those great Saints, such as would not steal the hearts of either from their heavenly Spouse, but would spur the emulous feet of both in the way of perfection.

St. Hilda in the last year of her life founded a nunnery at Hackness ; thither St. Bega came, on a visit to the nuns, a few days before St. Hilda's death. The abbess was not at Hackness herself, but, as it would appear, at Whitby, and had left a nun named Freitha to govern the new community for the time. Hackness, it must be remembered, is thirteen miles from Whitby. Now one night about cock-crowing, that is, before matins, Bega was lying in the dormitory at Hackness. Suddenly she heard in the spirit the great bell of Whitby convent, which was tolled to call the community together when any of them was dead ; and above she beheld an immense light pouring down from heaven, and filling every part of the building, the roof of which seemed to be entirely taken away, and amid the intolerable blaze she discerned what she was given to understand was the soul of St. Hilda, borne by Angels into heaven, and overpassing the realms of purgatory. When she came to herself, Bega, uncertain whether she had dreamed a dream or seen a vision, felt inwardly sure that God had taken St. Hilda to herself. Half in sorrow, half in fear, she awakened Freitha, and the whole community rose up, and for the rest of the night sang psalms and said prayers for the repose of their blessed mother's soul. In the morning some of the monks came from Whitby to acquaint them with the decease of the abbess, which took place at the very hour when it had been revealed to Bega.

In its outward circumstances this holy legend looks at first sight like a modern ghost story. Of course it is really a very different thing, if for no other reason, at least for this, that the two persons concerned were blessed Saints of the holy Church. But the legend is interesting for another reason, and on such a subject-matter by interesting is meant edifying. If by observant classification important laws are come at in human sciences, perhaps by a reverent and minute attention to all that is preternatural in the lives of the Saints a serious man might come to learn a great deal that was very solemn indeed, and which would serve for the illustration of many principles of ascetic and still more of mystic theology handed down by the anchorets and monks and spiritual masters of the Church. So far as many actions are concerned, which seem to the world as if reversing right and wrong, there is most undeniably a singular uniformity visible in the endless variety of the lives of the Saints; and it may be that there is a similar uniformity in the preternatural visions, revelations, and the like, which are so seemingly various in sacred histories; and if it be so it must be extremely instructive, though it demands a most reverential study as remembering Whose dealings they are which we are venturing to gaze upon. Now there has been hardly any kind of visions, so obviously making a class, as the visions of disembodied spirits either at the moment of departure or issuing out of purgatory; and this revelation made to St. Bega of her friend's decease, having been shared by so many other Saints both ancient and modern, is more interesting than if it were some distinctive favor granted to herself only. Thus St. Kentigern saw the angels carrying up to heaven the soul of the great St. David at the very hour of his

death ; St. Benedict saw the soul of St. Scholastica his sister pass upwards like a dove, and though his own soul was not seen, yet the luminous track by which it ascended was visible to some of his monks ; and when those who revere the primitive ages of the Church feel backward to admit the many stories told of St. Theresa and St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi seeing souls liberated from purgatory, they should remember how St. Perpetua early in the third century saw the soul of her little brother Dinocrates issuing purified from an intermediate place of darkness, when she interceded for him in prison after her first glorious confession. Perhaps it may incline some readers to think more worthily of what is here but an obscure English legend, resting on evidence not particularly clear, if we go a little out of our way, and put side by side with it a story, strikingly similar in all points, told of no less a Saint than St. Benedict and by no less a doctor than St. Gregory the Great, whose memory may well be blessed among Englishmen.

Among the early Benedictine monasteries was that of St. Sebastian in Campania ; Mabillon calls it thirty miles from Monte Cassino. The abbot of this monastery, Servandus, a deacon, was an intimate friend of St. Benedict, and St. Gregory tells us they used often to meet to hold spiritual conferences and thus to give each other the sweet food of the heavenly country in pious discourses. One night after they had separated, St. Benedict remained in the upper part of the tower in which he generally dwelt, and Servandus went to rest at the bottom, there being a staircase communicating between the two apartments. It was not yet time for matins, but Benedict was one whose eyes full often prevented the night-watches. He was standing at his

window, possibly that the chill night-air might dispel his drowsiness, and there he prayed to God. It was a calm night, and suddenly a great light was poured down from heaven, which absorbed all the darkness, till the night became even more radiant than the natural day. It seemed to St. Benedict that the whole world was so collected under that light and illumined by it, that he saw it all at one simultaneous glance, like our blessed Lord's vision from the top of Quarentana. While the Saint stood gazing on this vision he saw a fiery sphere traversing the brightness, and ascending up to heaven. It was borne by angels, and in it St. Benedict discerned what he recognized to be the soul of Germanus, bishop of Capua. We say *recognized*, as the nearest word to express the meaning, remembering the recognition of Moses and Elias by St. Peter, which was *perhaps* not miraculous but according to some laws of the spiritual world of which we know nothing. St. Benedict immediately called Servandus to ascend the tower, that he might be a witness of the revelation. Servandus, either arriving as the vision was fading or seeing as much with his bodily eye as the inward illumination of his soul allowed, beheld some small portion of the exceeding brightness. Forthwith St. Benedict despatched some one from the neighboring town to the city of Capua, where he learned that the holy Germanus had departed to a better life at the very hour at which the Saint had been favored with the vision. And are not all holy men the servants of Him who spake in old time by vision unto His Saints ?

After the death of St. Hilda Bega returned no more to Tadcaster ; but abode in the nunnery of Hackness. At her friend's death, whom she did not long survive, she had led a monastic life for more than thirty years ;

and it may have been some presentiment or foreknowledge of her own coming departure which induced her to remain among St. Hilda's children at Hackness. She entered into her rest on the 31st of October : her biographer says, "aptly enough, while she was observing the Vigil of All Saints she quitted the world to join their society, that, winter coming upon the earth, all winter might pass away from her, leaving it ; and the rain might cease and depart, that eternal spring might shine upon her, and the bloom of roses and the lilies of the valley might appear to her in heaven."

After this the Danes came down like a flood upon the land, and the relics no less than the records of many of the Saints were lost, and their holy houses burnt and plundered, and the Church had much ado, not without miraculous helps, to retrieve what she did retrieve when something like peaceful times came back to her. The very local features of the ancient sanctity were worn out from the face of the land, and in many places irrecoverably obliterated. A very awful judgment it was, and it was truly wonderful how well the Church recovered from it. Amidst the confusion all tradition of St. Bega's burial was lost ; the quiet houses which St. Hilda planted were overwhelmed by the marauding bands, and became miserable desolations instead of goodly homes perpetually vocal with divine psalmody. "The precious pearl lay hid in the heart of the earth," so the monk speaks of St. Bega's body ; and so time went on till the twelfth century, somewhere about 460 years after her death, and then it was revealed to some holy men, probably devoted to the memory of the Saint, that she lay buried in the cemetery at Hackness. Supposing the veneration shown by the catholic Church for the Saints, and the honors paid to their relics, to be, as

dogmatic writers teach, a necessary growth of the doctrine of the Incarnation, these discoveries of particular relics at particular times may all have been providentially ordered so as to meet certain emergencies in the Church, and to reinforce her life and vigor at a given season. The holy men were not disobedient to the admonition ; they repaired to the cemetery at Hackness, and after much digging they found a sarcophagus on the lid of which were the words, Hoc est sepulchrum Begu. On removing the lid a small clod (gleba) of her body was found, and a veil upon her head hardly corrupted at all ; and a sweet odor breathed from her relics, which were transported to the monastery in solemn procession.

The Cell or Priory of St. Bega on the headland which bears her name on the Cumbrian coast was built in the reign of Henry the First, and a monk named Robert was the first prior. Many miracles were wrought at her intercession in the country round about ; and to swear on the bracelet of St. Bega was the most solemn of all oaths, which few durst break, for many and well authenticated were the instances in which immediate and signal vengeance had fallen upon the offenders. The bracelet appears to have been found by the people after her precipitate flight. It would be cherished first as an affecting memorial of a benefactress, and then held in reverence as the authentic relic of a Saint. There are many interesting traces of the way in which this mysterious bracelet acted as something humanizing in that wild district, and stood in the stead of law during times in which law's voice, however majestic, was too calm to be heard. It would be beyond the scope of this memoir to give a detailed account of these miracles, resting as they do on very slight evidence, and all

tending one way, namely to show how the devotion to St. Bega was, independent of higher ends to separate souls, a great power of civilization in the region where she had dedicated herself to God in a solitary and virgin life. One miracle, however, may be related, not as resting on better evidence than the others, but partly as having a singular poetical beauty, and partly as being a thing not at all unlikely to happen (though there is no proof that it did happen in this case) in rude times when the quiet hand of social order could not make itself felt, and the monuments of ancient piety were likely to be lost amid the covetous knights and rough-handed barons, who looked with jaundiced eye on the fair fields and good broad lands which had been severed from their patrimony and given to the Church by their more devout ancestors.

The story runs thus. Ranulph Meschines was a very great man in Copeland, and at one time a very good man, which is not often the case with great men. He had a special devotion to St. Bega, as was natural for a Copeland man ; and he thought it very wrong the Saint should have no shrine in those parts where she had led such a marvellous and holy life. But Ranulph did not content himself with thinking about the matter. There was a much shorter interval between word and deed then than there unhappily is in our days. Ranulph started off to York,—he could not go to a better place ;—there he went to the monastery of our Blessed Lady, —whose monks so fit as St. Mary's to serve a Saint like Bega, a virgin too herself of royal lineage ? there he asked for some monks and got them. He carried his prize into Copeland ; the goodly town of Kirkby stood on or near the site of Bega's hermitage, and luckily it was his own town, houses, people and all, and he gave



it with sundry lands to God and St. Mary, and built a cell in honor of St. Bega, and the place was called Kirkby Begog, now St. Bees. Afterwards Ranulph wished he had waited a little longer, and he began to open his ears to what worldly people said about the holy friars, and to think that monks were very useless people, and he had not even the consolation of knowing what a great many people would be of his opinion in times to come. However Ranulph wished he had his lands back again : the oftener he looked on the goodly crops in the monks' fields, probably much better cultivated than his own, the more protestant he grew. As was said before, in those days men acted upon their thoughts with a rapidity unknown at present : he had made a mistake certainly in bringing these monks into Copeland ; the next best thing was to starve them out. Ranulph was assuredly, as modern historians speak, in advance of his age ; he anticipated exactly (for there is a striking uniformity in wickedness irrespective of centuries) the line of conduct which Henry the Eighth adopted, only Ranulph was not a king, so he could not hang the prior of St. Bees. Like Henry, Ranulph wished to have the lands of the Church, and yet to be quite orthodox ; so he was obliged, as it would have been very unseemly then to have laid violent hands on the monks, to descend to the more commonplace remedy of a law-suit, which must have been both tedious and mortifying to a strong-handed man like Ranulph. Still monks were the order of the day then, so nothing else would do. After many delays, which no doubt teased the poor monks as well as chafed Ranulph, the lawyers fixed a day for the final and peremptory decision, and summoned the country people to be eye-witnesses of the settling of the boundaries, so that it might become a

matter of notoriety and not be called in question again. Ranulph did not want the church or the conventual precinct : they would be awkward property to a man of his turn of mind ; he would be content with the lands. The unhappy monks, frightened by Ranulph and bewildered by law, thought the best thing they could do was to invoke St. Bega, i. e. to put their trust in God, for which the other was only a roundabout method of expression, which the reader may or may not approve. Well—the day came, and the monks, and the lawyers, and the country people, and Ranulph too. Doubtless nobody stayed at home in Copeland but those who were too old or too young to leave ; and perhaps we should not be mistaken in divining that the sympathies of the rustics were all with the monks, for it was only the love of the poor, ignorant, uneducated, superstitious people, which kept monks uppermost so long. Now, if Bega was to appear to settle the question herself, in what possible form could she come better or more aptly or with more unmistakeable figure, virgin as she was, than in whitest chastest snow ?<sup>13</sup> Nobody could doubt what that meant : and so it was : down came a most sudden and unlooked-for fall of whitest snow : mountains and tree-tops, house-roofs and sea-shore, all through Copeland were covered with dazzling snow : but every rood which the monks claimed was most accurately marked out : not a flake fell thereon : all Copeland was white, and the sea was blue, and the monks' lands, like a colored province in a map, all of radiant green. Thus there could be no question but that Bega had herself put a most summary stop to the law-suit ;

<sup>13</sup> The reader may remember the beautiful tradition of the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore at Rome, otherwise St. Mary ad Nives.

the monks thought, for they tell us so, of Gideon's fleece ; the rustics were convinced ; the lawyers did not, perhaps durst not, say they were not ; and it was plain the less Ranulph said the better, for he was not in a particularly pleasant or dignified position. This story is interesting as showing a somewhat strange relation between a convent and its "pious founder :"<sup>14</sup> it may be hoped such relative positions were not common in those days. It is certainly in that point of view a very ugly story.

It has already been mentioned that on the headland of St. Bees there is still a school of Christian doctrine, something like a local connection, a frail yet unbroken tradition, between old times and our own. And it is said <sup>15</sup> that at this day the inhabitants of the neighboring villages resort to the Church of St. Bees at Easter for the purpose of communicating, and that from a considerable distance, insomuch that the village is quite crowded, and the clergy are obliged to have an early Communion in addition to the one which follows morning prayers. There is something very, very mournful in the way in which we are driven to cherish even such poor acknowledgments of love for the Catholic Past.

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By the kind permission of the author we are allowed to reprint entire Mr. Wordsworth's beautiful stanzas on St. Bees, written, be it observed, so long ago as 1833. The date is noticed as giving a fresh instance of the

<sup>14</sup> Nicholson and Burns make *William Meschines*, Ranulph's brother, the founder or restorer (if the Danes had destroyed a previous cell) of St. Bees.

<sup>15</sup> By Mr. Tomlinson, note, p. 80.

remarkable way in which his poems did in divers places anticipate the revival of catholic doctrines among us. When any one considers the tone of sneering which was almost universal in English authors when treating of a religious past with which they did not sympathize, the tone of these verses is very striking indeed, the more striking since Mr. Wordsworth's works prove him to be very little in sympathy with Roman doctrine on the whole. Yet the affectionate reverence for the catholic past, the humble consciousness of a loss sustained by ourselves, the readiness to put a good construction on what he cannot wholly receive, are in this poem in very edifying contrast with even the half irreverent sportiveness of Mr. Southey's pen when employed on similar subject-matters. The poet, it may be observed, assumes on the authority of county historians a Cell of St. Bega destroyed by the Danes, and so traces the history of the sacred headland down to the modern college. The reader, acquainted with Mr. Wordsworth's poems, will find an alteration in the last stanza ; it has been printed as it is here given at the request of the author himself.

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## STANZAS

SUGGESTED IN A STEAM-BOAT OFF ST. BEES' HEADS, ON THE COAST  
OF CUMBERLAND.

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IF Life were slumber on a bed of down,  
Toil unimposed, vicissitude unknown,  
Sad were our lot : no hunter of the hare  
Exults like him whose javelin from the lair  
Has roused the lion ; no one plucks the rose,  
Whose proffered beauty in safe shelter blows  
'Mid a trim garden's summer luxuries,  
With joy like his who climbs, on hands and knees,  
For some rare plant, yon Headland of St. Bees.

This independence upon oar and sail,  
This new indifference to breeze or gale,  
This straight-lined progress, furrowing a flat lea,  
And regular as if locked in certainty—  
Depress the hours. Up, Spirit of the storm !  
That Courage may find something to perform ;  
That Fortitude, whose blood disdains to freeze  
At Danger's bidding, may confront the seas,  
Firm as the towering Headlands of St. Bees.

Dread cliff of Baruth ! *that* wild wish may sleep,  
Bold as if men and creatures of the Deep  
Breathed the same element ; too many wrecks  
Have struck thy sides, too many ghastly decks  
Hast thou looked down upon, that such a thought  
Should here be welcome, and in verse enwrought :  
With thy stern aspect better far agrees  
Utterance of thanks that we have passed with ease,  
As millions thus shall do, the Headlands of St. Bees.

Yet, while each useful Art augments her store,  
What boots the gain if Nature should lose more ?  
And Wisdom, that once held a Christian place  
In man's intelligence sublimed by grace ?  
When Bega sought of yore the Cumbrian coast,  
Tempestuous winds her holy errand crossed :  
She knelt in prayer—the waves their wrath appease ;  
And, from her vow well weighed in Heaven's decrees,  
Rose, where she touched the strand, the Chantry of St. Bees.

“ Cruel of heart were they, bloody of hand,”  
Who in these Wilds then struggled for command ;  
The strong were merciless, without hope the weak ;  
Till this bright Stranger came, fair as day-break,  
And as a cresset true that darts its length  
Of beamy lustre from a tower of strength ;  
Guiding the mariner through troubled seas,  
And cheering oft his peaceful reveries,  
Like the fixed Light that crowns yon Headland of St. Bees.

To aid the Votaress, miracles believed  
Wrought in men's minds, like miracles achieved ;  
So piety took root ; and Song might tell  
What humanizing virtues near her cell  
Sprang up, and spread their fragrance wide around ;  
How savage bosoms melted at the sound  
Of gospel-truth enchained in harmonies  
Wafted o'er waves, or creeping through close trees,  
From her religious Mansion of St. Bees.

When her sweet Voice, that instrument of love,  
Was glorified, and took its place, above  
The silent stars, among the angelic quire,  
Her chantry blazed with sacrilegious fire,  
And perished utterly ; but her good deeds  
Had sown the spot that witnessed them, with seeds  
Which lay in earth expectant, till a breeze  
With quickening impulse answered their mute pleas,  
And lo ! a *statelier* pile, the Abbey of St. Bees.

'There are the naked clothed, the hungry fed;  
And Charity extendeth to the dead  
Her intercessions made for the soul's rest  
Of tardy penitents; or for the best  
Among the good (when love might else have slept,  
Sickened, or died) in pious memory kept.  
Thanks to the austere and simple Devotees,  
Who, to that service bound by venial fees,  
Keep watch before the altars of St. Bees.

Are not, in sooth, their requiems sacred ties  
Woven out of passion's sharpest agonies,  
Subdued, composed, and formalized by art,  
To fix a wiser sorrow in the heart?  
The prayer for them whose hour is passed away  
Says to the Living, profit while ye may!  
A little part, and that the worst, he sees  
Who thinks that priestly cunning holds the keys  
That best unlock the secrets of St. Bees.

Conscience, the timid being's inmost light,  
Hope of the dawn and solace of the night,  
Cheers these Recluses with a steady ray  
In many an hour when judgment goes astray.  
Ah! scorn not hastily their rule who try  
Earth to despise, and flesh to mortify;  
Consume with zeal, in wingèd ecstasies  
Of prayer and praise forget their rosaries,  
Nor hear the loudest surges of St. Bees.

Yet none so prompt to succour and protect  
The forlorn traveller, or sailor wrecked  
On the bare coast; nor do they grudge the boon  
Which staff and cockle-hat and sandal shoon  
Claim for the pilgrim: and, though chidings sharp  
May sometimes greet the strolling minstrel's harp,  
It is not then when, swept with sportive ease,  
It charms a feast-day throng of all degrees,  
Brightening the archway of revered St. Bees.

How did the cliffs and echoing hills rejoice  
What time the Benedictine Brethren's voice,  
Imploring or commanding with meet pride,  
Summoned the chiefs to lay their feuds aside,  
And under one blest ensign serve the Lord  
In Palestine. Advance, indignant Sword !  
Flaming till thou from Panyon hands release  
That Tomb, dread centre of all sanctities  
Nursed in the quiet Abbey of St. Bees.

But look we now to them whose minds from far  
Follow the fortunes which they may not share.  
While in Judea Fancy loves to roam,  
She helps to make a Holy-land at home :  
The Star of Bethlehem from its sphere invites  
To sound the crystal depth of maiden rights ;  
And wedded life, through scriptural mysteries,  
Heavenward ascends with all her charities,  
Taught by the hooded Celibates of St. Bees.

Who with the ploughshare clove the barren moors,  
And to green meadows changed the swampy shores ?  
Thinned the rank woods ; and for the cheerful grange  
Made room where wolf and boar were used to range ?  
Who taught, and showed by deeds, that gentler chains  
Should bind the vassal to his lord's domains ?  
The thoughtful Monks, intent their God to please,  
For Christ's dear sake, by human sympathies  
Poured from the bosom of thy Church, St. Bees !

But all availed not ; by a mandate given  
Through lawless will the Brotherhood was driven  
Forth from their cells ; their ancient House laid low  
In Reformation's sweeping overthrow.  
But now once more the local Heart revives,  
The inextinguishable Spirit strives.  
Oh may that Power who hushed the stormy seas,  
And cleared a way for the first votaries,  
Prosper the new-born College of St. Bees !



Alas ! the Genius of our age, from Schools  
Less humble, draws her lessons, aims, and rules ;  
Would merge, Idolatress of formal skill,  
In her own systems God's Eternal Will.  
To Her despising faith in things unseen  
Matter and Spirit are as one Machine.  
Better, if Reason's triumphs match with these,  
Her flight before the bold credulities  
That furthered the first teaching of St. Bees.

1833.

THE END.

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